

Episode 8: Mysticism in the streets | A conversation with Leah Gunning Francis

“Every time I look in the eyes of the young people out there on the streets standing up, speaking up, I see mystics. I do.”

June 2, 2021



During the Ferguson uprising in 2014, in the wake of the murder of Mike Brown, Leah Gunning Francis was serving as an associate dean and assistant professor at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. She interviewed more than two dozen clergy and young activists who were actively involved in the movement for racial justice, in Ferguson and beyond, and wrote the book [*Ferguson and Faith: Sparking Leadership and Awakening Community*](#).

Her words from the end of *Ferguson and Faith* are as relevant today as they were in 2015:

“The fight for racial justice emerges out of the fight for human dignity. If there is any group of people who should be compelled to join this fight, it is the people who call themselves, 'children of God.' Staying awake to the injustices that have been revealed through the Ferguson-related events is a critical task for communities of faith. Our connectedness to our brothers and sisters is rooted in our connectedness to God, for we are all God’s children. And, in the words of the Civil Rights freedom fighter Ella Baker: 'Until the killing of black men, black mothers’ sons, becomes as important to the rest of the country as the killing of a white mother’s son—we who believe in freedom cannot rest until this happens.'”

In this episode we talk about activism as being "a return to the core and crux of our faith," and how "what you're contemplating ought to cause you to live differently and intentionally."

[Leah Gunning Francis](#) earned a B.S. from Hampton University; an M.Div. from the Candler School of Theology; and a Ph.D. from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. Her next book, [*Faith After Ferguson: Resilient leadership in pursuit of racial justice*](#), will be published in fall of 2020 by Chalice Press.