

Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

July 24, 2023



Chartered: May 1, 1922

WELCOME and INTRODUCTIONS

It turns out that running a Rotary meeting as President is exactly like riding a bicycle: Once you've learned how to do it, you hold that knowledge in what experts call your "procedural memory," and you can easily manage it over and over again, always with apparent effortlessness.



Past President **CASH ALAEE** called us together for our regular Monday meeting, acting on behalf of President **LIZ**, who joined us via Zoom. At CASH'S request, **BRIAN STEEN** introduced his guest Burke Owens, the new Senior Pastor at the First United Methodist Church. Burke holds a Master of Divinity degree from the Pacific School of Religion and served in Petaluma and St. Helena before his recent arrival in Palo Alto.

QUOTE FOR THE DAY

CASH called his own number to share a Thought for the Day regarding the 27.6 million individuals held in forced labor worldwide. According to the US Department of State, 17.3 million of them are exploited in the private sector, 6.3 million in forced commercial sexual exploitation, and 3.9 in forced labor imposed by governments. There is now a Rotary Club to End Human Trafficking, established in 2017 as a project of

District 5950. You can find more information about it at <https://endhrotaryclub.org>.

PRESIDENTS CLUB

SALLY TOMLINSON joined the President's Club to recognize and thank **DANA TOM** for delivering the high-quality technical support that Sally had purchased as a Rotary auction item. According to Sally, Dana cheerfully provided much more than the promised hour of topnotch help.

SERVICE PROJECTS

As a hands-on community service opportunity: CASH reported that it will be our club's turn once again on August 2 to prepare and distribute meals to food-insecure families through Nuestra Casa at the Rise City Church, 1305 Middlefield Road, Redwood City. If you're available to pitch in, please contact **DANA TOM**

TODAY'S PROGRAM

Our speaker today was introduced by **SALLY TOMLINSON**. **Dr. Lerone Martin**, is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Stanford University and the **Martin Luther King, Jr.,**



Centennial Chair and Director of Stanford's Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute.

His undergraduate degree was earned at Anderson University and he has a Master of

Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminar and a Ph.D. from Emory University.

His most recent book and the subject of his presentation to us was **"The Gospel of J. Edgar Hoover: How the FBI Aided and Abetted the Rise of White Nationalism."**

When Dr. Martin was teaching at Washington University in St. Louis, he became aware that the Federal Bureau of Investigation was seeking assistance from faith communities – in particular, Black communities – in anticipation of social unrest after Michael Brown was killed by police in Ferguson, Missouri.

Dr. Martin began using the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to explore correspondence and other records maintained by the FBI regarding religious leaders, including the Reverend Billy Graham. The material provided to Dr. Martin in response to FOIA requests provided extensive information about J. Edgar Hoover, FBI Director from 1935 to 1972.

According to Dr. Martin, Hoover made "his understanding of white Christian nationalism" the backbone of FBI practice and policy. Hoover had been serious about religion since his boyhood; he taught Sunday school dressed as a high school military cadet. His view of the Christian life focused on individual salvation as opposed to social change. He spoke of the nation's "Christian endowment" as a significant element of American tradition and culture. If you worked at FBI headquarters, you would be invited to spiritual retreats where you might study the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and hear such speakers as Fulton Sheen and Vince Lombardi.

The key to Hoover's involvement with the evangelical movement was his connection with the journal Christianity Today, founded by Billy Graham. An FBI Special Agent, Fern C. Stukenbroeker, wrote essays that the magazine published with Hoover identified as their author; the FBI sent out reprints of Hoover's articles under a Bureau masthead. (If you wrote to Hoover asking for advice, you

might receive a copy of one of these articles.) Dr. Martin believes that Stukenbroeker was also the ghostwriter of Hoover's bestselling book, Masters of Deceit (1958).

According to Dr. Martin, Hoover was advised by the responsible officials within the FBI that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was not a Communist and not a vector of Communist influence, but Hoover simply refused to accept that advice. As someone close to Hoover put it, "Facts by themselves may not be meaningful; they're like individual stones that have no significance until you assemble them into a wall."

It is believed that under Hoover's leadership, the FBI sent an anonymous letter to King in 1964, saying "There is only one thing left for you to do," which King interpreted as suggesting he commit suicide. Hoover never retreated from his position that King was "the most dangerous" Black man in America.

TODAY'S VOLUNTEERS

Greeters: **Mike McMahon, Ullrich**

Schwertschlag

Cashier/Welcome Desk: **Katie Seedman, Rebecca Gerald**

Zoom/Hybrid Host: **Dana Tom**

Pinion writer: **Hal Mickelson**

Pinion editor: **Ginny Lear**

UPCOMING PROGRAM

July 31 12:15-1:30pm Club Meeting	Bjoern Eskofier, Visiting Professor, Stanford U. Artificial Intelligence in Medicine
August 7 12:15-1:30pm Club Meeting	Wendy Stratton, Principal, Gunn HS Perspectives on High School Education in Palo Alto
August 9 8:00-9:00 am	Club Board Meeting Zoom