

## Holy Ground: On Activism, Environmental Justice, and Finding Hope

**Catherine Coleman Flowers**

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The lyrical, hard-hitting essays in Catherine Coleman Flowers's collection *Holy Ground* synthesize history, science, and faith.

The recipient of a MacArthur "Genius Grant" for her environmental activism, Flowers spent decades bringing people of diverse political persuasions together to collaborate for improvements in rural sanitation. These essays cover places where the policies of the past impact the present and where climate change, greed, politics, and poverty intersect. Connections between these elements are drawn with a deep understanding of history and a comprehensive knowledge of the science of sanitation. And beyond their intellectual engagement, the essays are further grounded by Flowers's resonant analyses of her past.

In "Migrations," Flowers covers her trip to the Climate Change Conference in Paris, which took place after she received the results of a DNA test and learned that she had French ancestors. In France, she experienced an eerie familiarity with the language and culture. Those feelings are considered alongside human migration data to capture similarities between people, followed by an assertion of interconnectedness and the idea that there's no escaping from the effects of climate change.

Elsewhere, a detailed history of Alabama's Black Belt, where Flowers grew up, is considered and connected to contemporary environmental travesties. Another essay connects the Supreme Court's *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* decision, which permits unlimited election contributions by megadonors, with the biblical story of Judas's betrayal of Jesus, transforming the thirty pieces of silver into a potent metaphor for contemporary corruption to comment on the dire consequences of decision-making in proximity to "the pernicious allure of money and power."

A courageous and intelligent essay collection, *Holy Ground* shares sobering facts to argue toward a better future.

MICHELE SHARPE (January / February 2025)

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