

FOREWORD BY LATASHA MORRISON

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**JOIN
THE
RESISTANCE**

STEP INTO THE
GOOD WORK OF
KINGDOM
JUSTICE

AFTERWORD BY DOMINIQUE DUBOIS GILLIARD



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MONDAY, MAY 25, STARTED LIKE ANY OTHER Monday beginning a week, and my youngest was days away from graduating from high school. I was so excited to celebrate with him and all he had accomplished, especially his final semester that had been interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic closing schools and moving students to online learning.

At the time I was serving as Advocacy and Strategic Engagement Director for Christian Community Development Association and I was supporting our newly hired president, an African American pastor from Minneapolis, Minnesota. With only three weeks under her belt, much of our time at work was spent helping her understand the details of our shared work. It wasn't supposed to be a heavy pressure time. We were adjusting daily to the pandemic inconveniences, but we were taking it in stride. It was a gentle beginning—or so we thought.

Over the course of the next couple of days, a video of a Black man being murdered by a White police officer began to go viral. The Black man was George Floyd, a name that would be heard around the globe, impressing on people from communities across

the world to march in the streets, calling for justice, chanting Black lives mattered, and renewing conviction that we needed to stop senseless, racially driven murders.

Because my work was in the advocacy space, my days those weeks were emotional and long, listening, connecting, and concerting with our community leaders, supporting them in their grief and response. My new boss who lived in Minneapolis shared her daily perspective of her city that was literally burning. The grief was palpable and desperate.

Rioting and looting had not only been happening in Minneapolis where George Floyd's murder took place, but also in cities across the country. The anger and frustration spilling from the Black community had reached a fevered pitch and they were demanding change. The pandemic kept us all a little closer to home than during the days of Mike Brown and the Ferguson protests, yet in my city of Denver the response looked similar. Marching, protests, and counterprotests drew harsh criticism, sparking division. Peaceful protests at times became riotous. The status quo was being shaken up.

Between the graduation celebrations and long work hours supporting leaders in cities across the country, it took me several days to join the marches. When I did go, my son Wil and his friend joined me, both new high school graduates of Denver Public Schools (DPS). DPS was leading the effort that day, centering Black students. High school students like my son's friend were invited to join the front of the parade, riding in the flatbed truck that was directing the marchers.

As we walked together, chanting familiar refrains, I felt so grateful for my city, its leaders, and my three kids, all DPS graduates. We all had marched for many years alongside our neighborhood friends for fair immigration laws, against racialized

policing, and against other issues that continued to perpetuate brokenness in our community. Even amid such hard things, it was an important time of community and solidarity. I was so glad I was able to share it with people from all over my city and Colorado.

While there was a familiarity as we hit the streets to show solidarity and call for change, this time was unlike anything I had experienced before. First, there were thousands and thousands of people pouring onto the streets to walk down Colfax toward the Martin Luther King Jr. statue in Denver's City Park. I couldn't recall a march that had drawn so many people. Second, many were young families with kids and strollers in tow. Third, so many were White; I had never seen so many White people come out in support of justice for people of color.

I should not have been surprised because I had been hearing the same thing from friends around the country and had seen it in pictures on social media, but now I was sharing the experience at my city's march. White people were out in droves. They wore Black Lives Matter T-shirts, something I was criticized for by the White community just a few years before. This was a different moment. I was skeptical but mostly I was really encouraged. Maybe a tide was turning? Maybe this was no longer a Black or Brown thing, but it was a community thing?

It was a good day, but it was far from unicorns and rainbows. As the blocks got longer and the loudspeaker became harder to hear, it didn't take long to see some bad practices. What I observed was that the White people didn't know how to protest. They didn't know how to chant, follow well, or keep the energy going. There were a few of us working on following the front but it didn't take long to see people begin to move forward to be better connected with the front of the action.

Seasoned marchers know not to show up with our own agenda, but rather to follow the leader, repeat their message, posture our actions after theirs. In this case it was Black men. A Black man had been murdered; Black men are the most at-risk to be shot and killed by police than any other people group. Following them were Black women, children, and young people.

As Wil and I marched we would see Black people come behind and we would take an instinctive step back, affording them space to pass. We understand that when marching, you center and follow people closest to the pain. That day this learned practice was not understood by many others. You could tell this was a new experience for those who had not had a lifestyle of community solidarity and marching.

Strollers don't push easily toward the front, so many White families stayed toward the back of the line, but over time I saw young White teenagers and several White men begin to work their way forward. Then, what started as moving forward became pushing. I couldn't believe what I was seeing—White people pushing Black people aside so they could get a better view!

As I looked out on this crowd of new protesters, who I believe in their hearts wanted to join the collective chorus, all I could think was, *My people. Oh, my people. We don't even know how to walk right.* Didn't they know that it wasn't about them? That it wasn't about them getting a good view? Didn't they know that they were there to join and add their voices, not to push them to the front?

That's when I realized, they didn't. No one had taught them to understand their place in this moment. No one had taught them that the moment did not start with their awareness and response that day. It was a good thing to wake up and respond to the

current pain and injustice, but they did not realize they were joining in and following a long-standing current for justice.

They did not realize efforts like these had been going on for years and generations before, whose efforts were not about one person or one issue, one video or one march, but an ongoing movement of resistance and solidarity, until everyone has justice. Their marching that day was just a beginning and like everyone else, they needed to learn their place in the moment and the bigger, overall work of resisting injustice.

LEARNING YOUR PLACE

I had just wrapped up a conference in Memphis, Tennessee, and I joined fellow colleagues to tour the Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel. The Lorraine Motel is where Martin Luther King Jr. was shot and killed. After that dreadful day, the owner of the motel, Walter Bailey, memorialized Room 306, King's room, by keeping it untouched and unrented. After the motel's permanent closure in 1988, the building was purchased and opened as a museum in 1991.¹

The museum tells the story of civil rights for African Americans from the early days of the slave trade until the present—it's an important memorial to the story and collective work of racial justice. Though I remember much of the museum and its informational and emotional journey, one of the more poignant moments was inside a replica of a Montgomery city bus with a life-sized sculpture of Rosa Parks sitting at the front. I walked through the bus with one of my colleagues and her elementary-aged daughter. I paused by Rosa Parks's sculpture and saw a depiction of her small frame and resolute face. My heart filled with deep admiration and gratitude for her bravery and leadership in the resistance work needed to promote civil rights.

Before I got off the bus, I looked back at my friend. She too stopped by the sculpture, then bent down and quietly spoke to her daughter. To this day I recall the image vividly. My friend, a Black woman from Chicago, later told me she wanted her daughter to understand all that those strong Black women and men had done to afford them the opportunities they had. She shared how important it was to walk the museum together.

Several years later I went back to the museum with another group of colleagues. This time I boarded the bus behind two of the African American women in our group. I stood in the back of the bus waiting as I watched each woman walk from back to front and place their hand on Rosa Parks's shoulder, audibly thanking her for all that she did for them and for Black people. I felt so grateful to share what I considered a sacred moment as well as a literal reminder of my place in the work.

However, inspired by Rosa Parks I may be, hers is not my story, nor the story of people who look like me. My shared efforts of racial solidarity and resistance to the status quo, while necessary and important, are not the same. I am there to follow the leadership and join the work; I am there to serve the movement.

FIRST STEPS

When my oldest child was in first grade, I received a call from a school parent asking for some support. This was not unusual, as the school had recently been built on community-driven support and was now in its second year. For several years' prior, community leaders had worked with the school board, with mill-levy bonds for funding, and with thousands of community participants to open the very first dual-language public Montessori school in the country.

It was exciting to join in support of this revolutionary new school that intentionally prioritized the value of equity and global citizenship. Half of the student body were native Spanish speakers, half native English—all learning together in two languages. Working across racial and cultural lines on behalf of this outstanding prototype was electric. It seemed like everyone associated with the school was a nonprofit leader, artist, teacher, or activist.

The second year the school was operating, a ballot amendment for the State of Colorado was to be brought to a vote. If it passed, English would be the only language students who did not speak English would be able to be taught. Our hard-fought, dual-language school model would tank. Cries from our community rose immediately and the need to organize, protest, call, resist was put into full swing.

When a parent called me to help get the news out, the request was simple—would you please make sure each parent in my child’s class got a flier when they picked their student up? Of course! It was the least I could do. I put a copy of each flier in every student’s box. Easy. Job done.

Later that afternoon I got a call from the principal—you can’t put political material in school boxes. Oh, well. I apologized and picked up my fliers at the school office. I began again, this time doing whatever I could to physically get the flier in each parent’s hand.

No one was asking me to do anything else. I chose to join the march that weekend, put signs on my car, talk to everyone I knew about the horrible amendment, but in the actual organizing work, I was only asked to hand out fliers. That was good. I was new to activism and protest work—I hadn’t even realized the extent of what was happening.

Later that month, when I piled my young kids into the family car and joined the protest march, I had never yet been a part of a protest march; I had never been on the front page of a newspaper; I had never chanted—this was my walking in. I did what I was asked. I brought my voice and my body, and alongside my neighborhood I shouted, “No on *treinta y uno*. No on thirty-one.” I was simply there to serve, to follow, to join.

JOINING UP

Joining our school community that season, I had no idea it would be a beginning of a life defined by activism. I had been heavily involved in nonprofit community development work but taking my personal convictions to a public place by marching was new.

The decade prior I had been a seventh-grade math teacher who worked in schools that state standards had declared failing. Nearly all my students came from families from a nearby housing project. They struggled with physical safety, educational opportunities, housing, and food security, among other things. After that season of teaching, I moved back to my home state of Colorado and, alongside my husband, David, started a home for homeless teenage girls.

I was deeply grateful to be able to move from a classroom where I interacted with students less than one hour a day to living alongside teen girls as they made brave, important choices to move their lives forward. After we started the transitional house, we worked alongside our church to form Open Door Ministries, a community development corporation that would provide the structure for the house we started and other existing and future social justice ministry programming for our church’s community.

My life was daily being shaped by social concerns stemming from poverty, racism, and immigration. Addressing those concerns in and with the community allowed in me the growth of deep roots of compassion and conviction to work toward change. It didn't take long for me to begin to understand that though the value of individual restoration and social justice was paramount, unless systems changed, we would never see the racial healing and community transformation we all desperately longed for and needed.

By the time I was asked to join in the school's fight against a bad amendment by handing out fliers and marching, I had already been serving on the front lines of social justice work, experiencing systemic barriers that would not simply right themselves. I was growing in my understanding that loving my neighbors and neighborhood also included my willingness to join them and confront systems of injustice.

CONFRONTING SYSTEMS

Injustice is not okay. In recent years, people have been waking up, some for the first time, to the reality that systems do not work for everyone, that elections are important, and that leadership is needed to unite a divided people. This awareness, while deeply grievous, is good, because joining the good work necessary to change systems requires people.

As a Christian, I am driven by my love for Christ and his love for others. My rootedness to the teachings of the Bible and the importance of living out what it says is central to my identity. It is both my faith and my practice. I also grew up in the church, and in addition to my spiritual formation, I was terrific at Sunday school. Being a good Sunday school kid not only meant you knew

your way around the Bible, but you also caught and practiced all the added on, cultural expectations of the church. I was trained to love God, love others, and be a good Pharisee.

I knew what behaviors and attitudes were and were not acceptable in the church. I was not only good at knowing the rules, but I excelled at following them. I share this because I knew then as much as I know now that mixing politics and the church is a big no-no. You could be a little political by identifying with one political party and working to reverse *Roe v. Wade* and gay marriage, but any other political thought or idea could lead to becoming the community pariah.

I gave no thought to that cultural rule before I became a teacher, before I moved into a community impacted by poverty, racism, and immigration status, before political issues and elected power made a difference in the health and wellness of my community. Before all that, the system worked for me and those I loved. After, the system still worked for me, but I could see how it was perpetuating hardship with little way out for my church community, neighbors, and friends. I could not deny that reality. Change needed to happen.

As I started to share what I was seeing and to tell the truth of all I was learning, I was getting closer and closer to that forbidden line—don't mix politics with the church. You can love the poor by meeting their immediate needs (mercy), you can even look more deeply into the problems and provide a social or community development response (social justice), but do not get political. Do not speak against the systems that keep the status quo in play. Do not cross that forbidden road.

It was much like the journey of the Samaritan along the Jericho Road, who crossed over to help minister to the half-dead, beaten

man, but after several years of helping hurting people I realized it's not okay to have a road that perpetuates the beating, robbing, and potential death of its travelers.²

If I was going to follow God's greatest commandment to love him with all my heart, all my soul, all my strength, and all my mind, as well as love my neighbor as myself, it was not okay if my family and I were good, and my neighbor wasn't. I realized that bold, radical love was not simply crossing a forbidden line but working to remove it entirely so that nothing stood in the way of working toward justice.

FAITH-ROOTED ACTIVISM

Somewhere in the journey of loving my neighbors, I had become an activist. Initial steps into that label honestly seemed foreign and a little uncomfortable. Having not known any activists in my early formation made it seem far off—the term connoted images of people that seemed extreme. I had moved, however, from silent observer of my community's stories to fellow steward. Stewarding means you assume or take some responsibility, ensuring that something gets done about a situation.

Taking some responsibility did not mean I was taking over; ensuring something got done didn't mean doing it my way. It simply meant that I needed to decide: Was I in the work or outside of it? Was I sharing and responding appropriately to the pain alongside my community or simply making notes about it and relaying it as a commentator?

I chose to be all in.

Not everyone is going to make choices like I did—that is not the point. The point is, as Christians who care about social justice, moving from the sidelines to join the sacred work of faith-rooted

activism needs to be intentional. However long your season to steward is, it needs to be stewarded well. It is not enough to simply become dissatisfied and commentate on the status quo. We must move toward substantive, restorative action that moves against the current of conformity, demanding a better, more just way.

The gospel, or good news, of Christ is a restorative work. At its center is God's heart for justice. God's justice, satisfied through Christ's salvific work, gives humanity a way back to God. The liberating power of the gospel puts us in right relationship with God, and as agents of his salt and light in the world, he invites us to join him in reconciling all things to himself. This restoration of *all* things goes well beyond the spiritual and encompasses a commitment to holistic restoration including emotional, mental, and physical restoration. This is the good, restorative work that we are called to join Christ in doing.

Jesus came to earth to shake things up, to introduce a new way forward, to usher in the kingdom of God. At the beginning of his earthly ministry, he went to the synagogue in Nazareth where he grew up. He stood up and read a prophecy from Isaiah that described his purpose in the world: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free" (Luke 4:18). He then said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).

Jesus came with purpose, to proclaim good news and freedom for the most oppressed in society. He came to heal some from physical blindness, and to reveal himself and his truth to people who were and remain blinded by lies and darkness. His reconciliation work of salvation was the starting point.

His radical message of a new kingdom defied power, religious practices, and superiority. Evidenced in humbly coming to earth, he demonstrated for us a new way forward, weaving together the justice of God with the sacrificial love of Christ. We see in 1 John 3:18 that it is not enough to simply love in words and speech, but we must also love *with actions* and *in truth*.

Being able to see pain, brokenness, injustice, and oppression is a grace; to tell its truth is transformative. Once we see the truth, we can accept our commission to join Jesus in his ongoing redemptive, restorative work. This restorative kingdom justice work gives birth to and compels us toward honest action that resists oppression and injustice at every level, especially the oppression of the vulnerable.

Faith-rooted activism allows our commitment of love to be on full display. This long, restorative, justice work is the long work of the kingdom. Whether it is the justice of God toward individual, social, or structural entities, we join with Christ in his redemptive work of restoration, not just in *word*. Our living, public witness to the wholeness of God's restoration is the good, necessary work of the people of God. Honest action that is founded on the justice of God, demonstrated in the love of Christ, and practiced by the people of God compels us to not stay silent in the face of injustice but instead to speak boldly against oppression.

A NEW KINGDOM, A NEW WAY

When Jesus started his ministry on earth, he came with a new, unfamiliar message—there was no more waiting for the Messiah; he had come. A new kingdom was being ushered in and there was no time to look back, the kingdom was here. But his forward-facing, new kingdom message, filled with prophetic conviction and holy fire, was met with resistance by the leaders of the day.

Jesus was a friend of sinners, a man acquainted with grief. He was a miracle doer, a feeder of thousands, a forgiver of sins, and a teacher. His teachings were new, yet familiar. The common people of the day were able to hear and follow him—God seemed close, and indeed he was! Jesus was God formed in man and fully present in their midst. Jesus’ love for the marginalized, the poor, the vulnerable was radical.

Centering a message that was good news to the marginalized infuriated the Jewish leaders of the day and drove them to plot to and eventually kill Jesus. Those leaders wanted to continue to center themselves and keep the poor from ever attaining the love, liberation, and redemption of God.

Shortly into Jesus’ ministry, he pulled together a group of disciples. Disciples were not a unique thing at that time. Pharisees had disciples; John the Baptist had disciples. But Jesus’ disciples were different. Jesus’ ragtag group of men and their unrefined ways of doing things drew harsh criticism from the leaders of the day. The Pharisees did not miss an opportunity to challenge both Jesus and the actions of his disciples.

One day this distinction of disciples and the practice of fasting came up. John the Baptist and the Pharisee’s disciples fasted, but Jesus’ were going around eating and drinking, and with the “wrong kind” of people. Jesus was asked about this, and he taught through a parable:

No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the

wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, “The old is better.” (Luke 5:36-39)

Jesus began to share this message about the new work God was doing through him and continues to do today—new practices, new messengers. God would use new ways to steward his never-changing truth in the world. In time new wine in new wineskins would yield good results that satisfy. One cannot get great old wine taste without being willing to use new wine and new wineskins.

Winemaking is not simply about which skins you pour into. It is a long, process-driven work. After you plant, nurture, and harvest the grapes, you must wash, crush, and strain the juice before putting it in the wineskins to ferment and become aged. Would you really want to do all that work and put it in a familiar, old, or used wineskin that is going to burst? What a futile effort! It’s the entire process that makes a wine great, not just the wineskin. New ways of holding something of value and allowing them to become seasoned can be a good thing.

Don’t allow yourself to become so nostalgic, rigid, or judgmental about the way God chooses to demonstrate his message that you miss a new way forward. God is always bringing forth his message and heart in new methods. Can we be open and ask him to help us see how he is restoring and making things new? Can we see him doing new things? Can we perceive it?

CAN WE PERCEIVE IT?

The prophet Isaiah, another forward-thinking truth teller, lived about seven hundred years before the birth of Christ. Isaiah was the prophet that told Judah they were going to be captured because they were so sinful and had walked away from God. He also

spoke about the coming of Christ and his redemptive work that would ultimately bring the people back to God.

In Isaiah 43 we see Isaiah speak to Judah's impending captivity. Up north, Israel had already been captured by the Assyrians for the same behaviors and practices that Judah was also doing: worshipping other gods, not caring for the poor, and centering personal gain regardless of God's law. God's justice and righteousness were being disregarded and captivity was in their future also.

Despite this impending reality, God's message to his people in Isaiah 43 is one of encouragement and reminder:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. (vv. 1-3)

No matter how terrible things looked. No matter how abandoned they felt, God would never leave them. He had chosen them and would not ultimately destroy them, and in time would bring them back together.

I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, "Give them up!" and to the south, "Do not hold them back." Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made. (vv. 5-7)

God was unlike any other gods. He had shown himself powerful and faithful before and would do it again. Redemption, the

nature of God, would rise. No enemy, no matter how powerful, could or would destroy what God established. Sure, they would look around and see desolation, but when they did, they could remember the same God of old “who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and [their enemies] lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick” (Isaiah 43:16-17). It is indeed the same God who will also carry them and us toward life and liberation.

The reminder of the faithfulness and demonstrated power of God in the past is indeed a comfort, even to those of us today. Yet, before the nostalgia and the mindset of the good old days could set in, Isaiah abruptly says: “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland” (Isaiah 43:18-19).

It is with this same tension we too must walk forward asking God to show us the new things he has in store for us. We must ready ourselves to have the grapes of new wine poured into our new wineskins. We need to allow the timeless truth of God’s heart, stewarded by those who have gone before us, to guide us as we pick up our mantle and walk forward. God affords new ways of doing things in and through us. We need to trust that despite the wastelands and deserts that we see as we walk, we too hold God’s promises and should be ever perceiving the new springs, streams, and ways forward that he will provide.

MAKING ROOM FOR SOMETHING NEW

On June 23, 1840, Lucretia Mott arrived at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. For the three decades’ prior,

England had been enacting legislation to end the slave trade, abolish slavery, and free around eight hundred thousand slaves throughout the British empire. Bringing together abolitionists from around the world to further the work of liberation was an important next step. Hundreds of delegates from around the world attended, including many Americans. Lucretia Mott was one of a handful of other women, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who intended to participate as delegates.

At that time Mott was a well-known and respected abolitionist. She had been speaking up and working to reverse the injustices of slavery in the United States for many years by the time she and her husband attended the 1840 London gathering. She boycotted slavery-produced goods and encouraged others to do the same. Alongside her husband she formed coalitions, hosted fugitive slaves, and raised and donated money to organizations that supported the abolition of slavery. So strong was her calling, leadership, and voice that she became a Quaker minister in 1821. Her Quaker faith taught and supported that God had created everyone equal, regardless of race, class, or gender. She used her platform to teach it.

When Mott walked into the convention in London with other women, they were not admitted. This was of no surprise to them as this male-only gathering had very specifically communicated that women were not welcome. The back-and-forth on the admittance of women took nearly a day to resolve, and finally the women were admitted but relegated to a women-only seating section and were unable to participate in any of the proceedings.³

That day Mott, aged forty-seven and a seasoned advocate, met Stanton, a twenty-five-year-old newlywed, and they agreed to begin to work together to add women's suffrage to their

abolition efforts.⁴ Not being able to attend a convention for equal rights and opportunities for slaves only highlighted the limited opportunities women also endured. Women were denied rights to their bodies and to their children, unable to own property, to work, earn, or keep their wages. Mott and Stanton birthed the US women's suffrage movement, and by 1848 they had organized and led the Seneca Falls Convention. This gathering was the first women's rights convention, where they drafted and recruited signers of the Declaration of Sentiments, a version of the Declaration of Independence writing women into the promises, privileges, and opportunities afforded those living in the United States.

Mott lived to see the end of slavery, as well as the passing of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments affording Black men some opportunities during the reconstruction era after the Civil War. The nineteenth amendment, which afforded women the right to vote and set a path forward for the women's rights that I enjoy today, came about forty years after her death.

I often reflect on Lucretia Mott, a strong woman of faith who bravely and publicly shared messages that spoke against the cultural and political norms of her time. I think of the pushback that other people of faith (women included) must have given her, those who did not believe that a woman had the authority to speak against injustices like slavery or women's rights. I am inspired by her openness to work with someone new, young, and inexperienced like Stanton who was not defined by the same faith but by a shared moral argument that all of humanity was created equal. I am grateful for her courage and uncompromising conviction to hold hope and work hard for more than one issue and to not stop working until justice was present.

NEW SONGS TO CARRY US ON FORWARD

During the civil rights movement, which was being driven primarily by the Black Protestant church, Peter Scholtes, a White priest at St. Brendan's on the South Side of Chicago, was serving and leading a youth choir at his parish. Catholics at the time were just beginning to step into new practices of ecumenical work across Christian denominations after a history of teaching that any form of Christianity outside of Catholicism was heretical.

This new day of trying to work under the shared banner of the love of Christ was needed at every level as cries for civil rights for Black Americans were coming from across the country. Scholtes wanted his youth choir to sing a song that spoke to the faith and love needed in the moment. Finding none, one day he quickly penned his own and taught the youth to sing it:

We are one in the Spirit. We are one in the Lord.

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.⁵

Scholtes did not write the song to become famous or be seen. He had a youth choir to lead and brought what he could to a moment that was not centered around him. In joining what others were doing, he wrote a timeless truth of what could and should be.

To this day, his song has crossed religious, cultural, and generational lines, reminding the church that their unified public witness of love for each other testifies to the restorative work of Christ.⁶

Boldly joining together in song helps strip away the darkness of cynicism, fear, and small faith, bringing us toward a common hope of liberation, boundless love, and justice. But singing alone, no matter how true and powerful the message is, won't get us the justice we seek. Neither will friendships across racial lines.

Reading all the books on bridging racial divides won't get us there either.

It is going to take a joining up, a walking in. A realization that the status quo does not yield itself easily to those who have been intentionally written out of the system, and that only a reckoning to change it will. That reckoning does not start with individual movement in a familiar direction but instead happens when as individuals we join alongside communities and walk together toward change. The current of the status quo is deep and wide—its powerful movement will catch you and bring you along toward its confluence. Walking against those powerful currents of conformity and complacency is a long, important work. This is the work of resistance and the more people who join up, the more powerful the impact.

In walking out of the downstream current to join up with the stream of resistance, we need to learn new ways, sing new songs, follow new leaders, and draw from a deeper faith that will open our eyes to the restorative power of Christ. Our initial steps may feel unfamiliar and be tentative, but the longer we walk the more we realize the work is not for the faint of heart. We need to become brave.

"THEY'LL KNOW WE ARE CHRISTIANS BY OUR LOVE"

youtube.com/watch?v=LZg8Ho-INqk



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