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INTRODUCTION

You walk the streets with bullhorns and signs, seeking equal rights. You break bread with difficult people in hopes of softening hardened hearts. You host meetings at your home, church, or library because you know you can't do it alone.

You are the change makers. Yes, you.

Maybe you've been at it for decades. Maybe you're just getting organized. But you are doing the work.

And the work is hard.

Being a change maker takes a toll. It's easy to forget to eat, or sleep, or pray, or occasionally see the sunlight. You may start to wonder if the work justifies your physical and spiritual exhaustion or why God would call you to do something that's so lonely and tiring.

This book is for you. Consider it your personal spiritual soundtrack for resistance. Slow jams of rest and replenishment when you're weary. Driving beats to get you back on your feet. Power ballads when you've got the powers of injustice on the run. "Rise Up" is a year's worth of devotions to keep you burning bright without burning out.

May these stories of hope, resistance, and resilience sustain you.

Nurture your spiritual health and wholeness, connect with your Creator, and please, keep changing the world!

Vince Amlin, Marchaé Grair, Christina Villa, Editors

RISE UP!



"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."

Matthew 4:19

FOLLOW ME

T R A C I B L A C K M O N

Whenever I read the gospel accounts of how Jesus organized The Discipleship Movement, I am reminded of how important it is to understand the roles of both leader and ally.

"Follow Me," Jesus proclaims over and over again as he invites others to help change the world. Some of his actions may seem illogical. He is a carpenter from Nazareth telling fishermen to "follow him" and he will make them fishers of men.

Who is he to tell others how to fish?

Later, Jesus issues an invitation to a tax collector to "follow him" in the Movement with no promise to make him treasurer. Time and time again, Jesus invites others to join him. The invitation is broad, and the directions are minimal but consistent. All who are willing to join are welcome, but you must "follow me."

Isn't it just like Jesus to teach us so much with so little? The organizing skills of Jesus remind us that true movements of liberation are best led by those who are being oppressed. This is why it matters that Jesus did not come as a person of great privilege, but rather as an Afro-Semitic Palestinian born on the wrong side of the tracks. It is from this context that Jesus begins a Movement, and it is from this context that Jesus invites others to follow.

Gracious One, in my quest to serve faithfully, help me to discern the call to follow as well as the call to lead, for both are righteous.

And allies begin to show up, with their bodies and their gifts and their skills, to follow.

Even when the plan does not seem to make much sense, even when some think a more aggressive agenda is needed, over and over again, they agree to be Jesus' allies in the struggle and they follow. There are moments when the disciples struggle with the leadership style of Jesus, yet they still follow. Most of them were oppressed themselves. They knew what it felt like to be hurt and marginalized in varying ways. But they followed.

I offer Jesus' example to us as we continue to strive together in the Movement work of our time.

The invitation to the ally is always to follow the leadership of those who are at the center of the pain.

The story matters. And choosing to work toward liberation of any kind requires a commitment to support the narrative of the ones who own the story. The role of the ally is not to lead or to fix. The ally holds the story and amplifies the voice of the storyteller.

"Follow me," Jesus says. Perhaps this simple invitation is the hardest of them all.

"For the love of God is this, that we obey God's commandments. And God's commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. "

1 John 5:3-4

I BELIEVE WE WILL WIN!

V I N C E A M L I N

In the cold of a Chicago January, I stood outside Terminal 5 at O'Hare International Airport surrounded by thousands of new friends. They were holding clever signs and waving the flags of America and Syria. Like others across the country, we were occupying the airport in protest over an illegal and immoral executive order on immigration.

I had been there for over an hour and joined in at least a dozen chants, when a new one started up. The person on the bullhorn began, "I believe we will win! I believe we will win!" I repeated the words, jumping up and down with the crowd to keep warm, but inside I was asking, "Is this true?"

The previous weeks (and subsequent ones) had brought so much pain, so much fear, so much loss. In my disappointment and cynicism, I wasn't at all sure that love would triumph and justice would be done—that we would win.

Then I noticed the signs around me—signs that quoted the scriptures of at least three faiths, signs that bore the commandments of a liberating God who has been welcoming refugees for millennia, signs that reminded me on whose behalf I had traveled to the airport on that chilly night.

Moments later, a cheer went up from the crowd. A federal judge had ruled against the ban. Families were being released.

But then, we all knew it would happen.

God, your love conquers all. Conquer my cynicism. I believe you will win.

"In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" Luke 18:2-5

NEVERTHELESS, SHE PERSISTED

K I T N O V O T N Y

When Senator Elizabeth Warren tried to read the words of Coretta Scott King on the Senate floor, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell attempted to silence her. He described the exchange with the meme-worthy words:

"She was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted."

The scolding became a feminist rallying cry.

All over the Internet, folks lifted up stories of persistent women throughout history whose fiery calls to justice could not be deterred: from Harriet Tubman to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Rosa Parks, Malala Yousafzai—even Princess Leia.

The Bible is full of our own cast of persistent women of faith who would not rest until freedom, healing and justice were served: the Syrophenician woman begging for crumbs of mercy for her sick daughter (Matthew 15); the hemorrhaging woman touching Jesus' cloak (Mark 5); this persistent widow in Luke's parable.

All apathy has its limits, even in those with no faith and no apparent respect for anyone. For God can use anyone for Her justice: even weary, morally bankrupt leaders poked and prodded by bold women.

Holy One, keep us bold for love, nosy for righteousness, and stubborn for your sake. Use us to keep bending that long and persistent arc of our moral universe toward justice.

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice... And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:4,7

JOY AS RESISTANCE

E M I L Y C . H E A T H

Alice Walker once wrote that "Resistance is the secret of joy!" I believe that. I also believe that it's inversely true as well: Joy can be resistance to the forces that would destroy us.

As a young activist I believed that it was irresponsible to be joyful while injustice flourished in the world. Happiness felt almost sinful while others suffered.

Later in life I learned that it wasn't my responsibility to fix everything. And I also learned a lot about joy. I learned that though this world will always be imperfect, there are often moments of extraordinary beauty and grace that require nothing less than our abundant joy.

Paul wrote to the church in Philippi and told them to "rejoice." It's worth noting that he was likely writing his letter from a jail cell. If anyone had reason not to be joyful, it was Paul. And yet, even in the midst of injustice, he found reasons for joy, and evidence of God's peace.

If that isn't resistance to the forces of evil in this world, I don't know what is.

Alice Walker wrote in *The Color Purple*, "I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it." My guess is it also pisses God off when we don't notice the goodness in our lives, and give God our joy.

God, help me to be a joyful resister of whatever would distract me from the signs of your goodness.



PRAYER IS RESISTANCE

"Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."

Amos 5:24

SNOWFLAKES

MATTHEW LANEY

At some point in the recent past, the word "snowflake" received new meaning. It no longer simply describes a small and totally unique ice crystal with six-fold symmetry; "snowflake" also derisively designates those who melt and wither quickly under the heat of the "real world."

Like, you know: liberals, progressives, people who wear pink hats. The so-called whiners and losers.

The word has even been applied to a whole generation. Millennials, for some, are the "Snowflake Generation," the allegedly coddled, entitled, emotionally fragile younguns who are intolerant of opposing views, feasting on the fruits of capitalism while constantly denouncing it . . . among other condemnations.

Now I haven't met every millennial out there, but I have yet to meet one who fits this description. In my experience, millennials might be the most no-nonsense-tough-minded-let's-roll-up-our-sleeves-and-change-the-world-right-now generation around. More so than Gen-Xers like me, on the whole.

And if "snowflakes" are the progressive people who took a beating from their husbands in advocating for women's suffrage, braved billy clubs and fire hoses marching for civil rights and get arrested in Moral Monday demonstrations, count me in. Crystallize me.

Because here's the thing about snowflakes: on their own, they are vulnerable, fragile, and easy to melt. That much is true. But when they join with a community or a mass movement, they become a storm that can shut down a city, a state or a region.

What is snow but crystallized water? Like the prophet Amos in his time, today's prophets might declare, "Let justice roll down like snow and righteousness like a mighty blizzard."

A blizzard of pink snowflakes descended on Washington D.C. on January 21, 2017, and on cities across the country. Because we stood together, we did not melt. We did not wither. We did not back down. History (Herstory!) was made. And the world took notice.

Be a proud snowflake. Just don't go it alone.

Crystallize us, God, and make of us a mighty storm of righteousness and love.

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