



## Calling Forth Justice

BY ARIF MAMDANI, SEMINARIAN AND MEMBER OF THE CLF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

How many of you have a decent relationship with the Bible—as in, you’ve had at least a couple of conversations and neither of you left angry? So, if you’ve made it through most of Genesis and into Exodus, you’ll have read one of the more famous call stories in the Bible. We refer to them as “call stories” because they’re stories of God calling someone to do something. And as generally happens, the people being called have doubts, misgivings, and basically try to avoid their call. ‘Cause when God calls, folks generally want to let it go to voicemail.

That’s pretty much what happened with Moses when God appeared to him as a burning bush. And, whether you believe in the God described in the story, whether you think Moses literally existed or not, I want to walk through a bit of this story with you—not as a Biblical story, but rather as an expression of some timeless truths that have bearing on how we show up for justice today.

So, Moses is out minding his own business and tending to his father-in-law’s flock when God shows up in a burning bush. Take a moment to put yourself in Moses’ sandals. You’re walking along, minding your own business when *boom*—there’s a burning bush next to you. And instead of taking off running, you move closer to see what’s going on.

Next thing you know, God’s talking to you.

And the burning bush says, “Moses! Come here! There’s something I need you to do for me.” Moses inquires, “Who are you?”—which is pretty reasonable given that we don’t usually have the experience of verbal flaming topiary.

And God says, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, and I have a job for you. I need you to go back to Egypt, visit Pharaoh, and tell him to let the Israelites go.”

Now, keep in mind that Moses had fled Egypt because he was a wanted man; a wanted man now being asked not just to go back to the country he had fled while fearing for his life, but to go back and seek an audience with the ruler of Egypt, *and* command him to let go a valued portion of his workforce. This is no small task.

So Moses, very understandably, responds, “Who, me? It can’t be. You’ve got the wrong guy.” He asks, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

God says, “Trust me, it’s okay. I will be with you.”

Moses has his doubts, however, and somewhat surprisingly argues with God, saying, “But I am not a good talker. I have never been eloquent, not in the past and not even now that you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and slow of tongue. *Please* send someone else.”

For Moses it was a last-ditch attempt to avoid the call, and it was the last straw for God as well. Really annoyed now with Moses, God says, “Fine. Get your brother Aaron. He’s charming, good with words and people. Grab him. I’ll be with the both of you, and the three of us will get this job done.”

How did it feel being Moses? If you set aside the doubts you may have about the supernatural bits that many of us rebel against, what was it like being called to do something that you don’t feel ready or equipped or able to do?

It isn’t hard to understand how Moses felt, is it? We’ve all felt that way at times, compelled toward something that we’re not quite sure we can really tackle. We’ve felt that fear, that sense of uncertainty, a deep-in-our-guts hope that

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It is justice,  
not charity  
that is wanting  
in the world.

—Mary  
Wollstonecraft

A monthly for religious liberals

### THINKING ABOUT JUSTICE

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someone else get picked for this job. Moses is called to serve something greater than himself. He is called to liberate, to set free his people. This is fundamentally an act of justice. And he resists. He has doubts. He argues. And then, though still not entirely sure, he moves forward with faith.

And I suspect that, if we're lucky, we've all had moments of feeling called to service by something bigger than ourselves, whether we think that call comes from somewhere out there or somewhere inside ourselves.

For many of us, a call comes in the form of longing for, and acting to create, more justice in the world. Something is unsettled in us, and instead of taking off we move in, like Moses did. It may not be a burning bush, but a voice is calling us to get curious, to dig into that sense of unsettling so that, on our own unique paths, we arrive with a sense that we are called to work for change.

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### Whiteness and privilege aren't chains on our bodies, but rather on our minds, our hearts, and our spirits.

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However, this is often the point where, like Moses, we have doubts. And like Moses we argue:

*Who am I to do this? Can I do this if I'm not perfect? What if they don't believe me? I don't know everything I could about these issues? What if they ask who I am? I know they'll see some part of my classism, sexism, racism, some part of me that isn't good.*

We argue. We have doubts. But with doubts in hand, we move forward in faith. And it's a good thing, because I believe we are being called again.

I believe that as people who believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all people and the deeply interconnected web of life, as people who believe in

upholding and working to create an ever more just, equitable and peaceful world, that we are being called, loudly, to work for racial justice. To stand with our Black siblings in faith, to find our voices and loudly proclaim that Black Lives Matter.

Perhaps even more than that, we are called to dismantle the scourge of racism, the system of white privilege, the culture of whiteness that pervades our society and uses race explicitly and implicitly to keep people out.

Perhaps you're tussling with the notion of what it means, right now, to be called to work for racial justice—as a UU, in a movement that is largely white. Am I suggesting that you go to the next Black Lives Matter march? Donate money? Shut down a highway? Protest at a mall? Yes, those are all great contributions, but here's the thing—those public witness moments, where we show up and draw attention to an issue—are not the actions that change systems.

The theory of change that's operating when we protest, be it a die-in for Black Lives Matter or a climate justice march and rally, is something like this: We do this protest action in order to draw attention. We disrupt business as usual because in doing so, people are jolted out of their everyday lives just a bit and politicians see that the public is in support of a given issue.

These actions are a display of power that declares something is wrong, something needs attention. As such, they are critical. Please don't misunderstand me—I am not at all suggesting we should sit them out. On their own, however, they are insufficient. Our public witness must be followed by the harder work of engaging head, heart, and action—our own and that of others—to uproot the virus of racism that sickens this nation.

Moses was called to go to the center of empire in his time, and set free his people. We too are called to confront Pharaoh, to set free our people. Only today,

our enslavement isn't primarily physical. Whiteness and privilege aren't chains on our bodies, but rather on our minds, our hearts, and our spirits.

Pharaoh isn't *out there* as much as *in here*. That's one of the things that makes this work so difficult. It is a big call. Who wouldn't resist it? When Moses was called to confront Pharaoh, he argued with the call. And when he moved forward to confront the power of Empire, he did so with God. With faith.

How do we do that? What does it look like for us to confront Pharaoh with our faith? Moses had God. Some of us don't, or can't the way that Moses did. I think we've got something better: The Shining Power of Unitarian Universalism! OK, so I'm being a bit funny, but really, I believe this.

Consider this: As Unitarian Universalists, our non-creedal faith equips us in a unique way for the moment we're called to. As UUs we're not told what to believe. No one comes around and says, *This is where we go when we die, this is our purpose while we're here, and here's why evil exists*. Instead, we're charged with a powerful, potent, and provocative invitation to engage in a search for truth and meaning that requires that we increase our ability to hold and sit with tension.

Sitting with tension matters because of where Pharaoh is, where empire is. The empire that we are called to confront today is, at least in part, inside us. We are all at least a little bit, and perhaps more than a little bit, Pharaoh. There is tension in saying that. It just is. Yet our faith also teaches us that there is liberation in naming things, that in such naming even the greatest evil can be apprehended and undone.

So we are called into conversation—first with ourselves, to listen for the deep call in our hearts, to understand and chip away at our own prejudices and biases. (We all have them.) And then we turn to those closest to us, and with an open heart, in loving con-

## Anger and Justice

BY AUDETTE FULBRIGHT,  
MINISTER, UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST CHURCH  
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The only word repeated more than once in our seven UU principles is the word “justice.” We are called to justice. But what does that call look like? What does it feel like? What does it demand of us? I was born female. The gender assigned to me at birth by the doctors’ observation of my physical body has largely conformed to my experience of myself: I also self-identify as female. By these measures, I have what is known as “cis-privilege.” The prefix “cis” comes from the Latin *cis*, meaning “on the same side of.” It is the antonym of the prefix “trans,” which means “on the other side of.” I have cis-privilege because this body/gender identity means I have experienced the world in a way that is normative: those of us who have comfortably inhabited the gender identities of our body and birth have dominance. Culture is built on our assumptions and our experience.

People who have a trans\* experience of the world—those who have to teach, tell, re-form or create alternate pathways in order to find a more whole

*Mamdani continued from page 2*

frontation, ask for and listen to their stories, worries, fears, and pains about a world in which privilege is no longer conferred by skin color.

These conversations can and will set a tidal wave in motion.

Our work isn’t just about meeting the moment we’re in. Even more it is about tilling the soil and preparing the ground so that when the next moment comes there are far more of us ready to put our hands and hearts and backs to the moral arc of the universe and help it to bend toward justice. ■

“fit” for their gender identity—have a very different experience. What I wanted to begin with was a story about a particular experience I had as a woman. But I can’t begin the story there, because it is *never* that simple. So let me identify where I begin this story: as a white-passing, cis, currently able-bodied woman of middling economic privilege, high education and class privilege. Although I am bisexual, in this story and in my marriage, I also have hetero-normative or straight privilege. Those are just the basics. But hold onto them. Whatever you may be thinking right now, those pieces are not superfluous.

When I was in seminary, I first began listening to my love, the feminist folk/rock singer Ani diFranco. I was also dating a man who ran the board on privilege; he had and still has them all, although he might argue a little about his place within economic privilege. I was singing along to a song where Ani describes a host of sexually abusive things that had happened to her from the time she was a child, just because she had a female body. Not one abusive thing—many. And as she sang, all these experiences from my own life clicked into place. I had never really put them together. To survive them, I had always kept them in disparate little pockets, a one-off here, a “just that guy” there.... I was crying.

Later, when my partner came over, he didn’t understand why I was upset, and when I tried to explain that I was suddenly experiencing the pain of a lifetime of gender and sexual-based oppression, with all good intentions he began to try to explain my experiences away. The song that reframed my experience ends tellingly. Ani sings:

*girl, next time he wants to know  
what your problem is  
next time he wants to know where  
the anger comes from  
just tell him this time the  
problem’s his  
tell him the anger just comes...*

That night, my sorrow and pain crystallized sharply. I was furious. My partner did not, could not, understand my experience. It was nothing like his own. His privilege had insulated him from it. And instead of listening and trying to understand, he decided to try to tell me that I didn’t understand my own experience, was making too much of it, and of course, that he himself was not abusive, so I should change my feelings—or at least not splash them on him. He didn’t mean to be hurtful. He wanted to help. But he made it all so much worse, because his inability to see me and believe me only exacerbated it all a hundredfold.

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**We are called to justice.  
But what does that call  
look like? What does it  
feel like?**

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We have all been on both sides of oppression, but all oppressions are not equal. Let me make this exceedingly clear. Some oppressions or moments of oppression are more dangerous—as Matthew Shepard’s death shows, or as anyone living where ethnic “cleansing” is taking place might attest. Some oppressions are more endemic and pervasive, as trans\* people or pretty much any person of color can illustrate all too well with examples from their lives. But we all have been on both sides of an oppressive moment. Maybe when we were children, and adults held all the power and our choices did not matter. Maybe when we were the only liberal in the Wyoming room.

But here’s the point: when someone is sharing that their experience of the world is dramatically different because they do not experience a privilege I experience, it’s my job to listen, to hear, and most of all, to not try to explain their experience away, to not deny it because it makes me uncomfortable or because I feel personally

implicated in the group or groups that hold oppressive power.

Let's look directly at rage. In the article that originally inspired me to tackle this difficult subject directly, GenX UU Tim deChristopher stated flat out that it was the Boomers' failures that have made the climate situation not just a concern but a crisis that will deform lives—ours and many generations to come. And he said he was *angry* about it. I imagine this feels personal to many of you. And then he said the thing that needed to be said: being able to express rage is an essential part of the work to change and heal.

As a Southern woman and a UU brought up under the tutelage of my elders, I had been enculturated differently. Nice white educated people know that being angry just doesn't help. We need to be nice and kind and considerate and work with hope and love toward all people. If we have feelings of anger, we need to deal with those privately and always remember to be nice to everyone. I didn't think that explicitly—it was just my basic assumption about how the world worked, and when someone went off-script on that, I thought they were “doing it wrong.”

Nowadays, I spend at least part of every single day in communities that are highly and intentionally diverse. I spend some portion of every day listening to and talking with people who are diverse across the spectrum of possibilities: people of different racial, ethnic, sexual, and gender identities; people from different countries, different backgrounds, people who are differently abled; people with mental and physical illnesses; people from different generations and economic backgrounds, people who are and are not parents, women who have had abortions, are sex workers, have different religious beliefs and backgrounds.

Here are things I know we have in common: we all identify as feminists, and we all have access to computers

and converse in English. Having said that, even our identities as “feminist” are frequently very different from one another. This community is built on and is sustained by a key principle: intersectionality. We understand that we all have privilege in some areas and experience oppression in others, and it's essential for us to be responsible for *ourselves* in community spaces.

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Here's what I have learned in intersectional space: that I am responsible for myself—for my own choices, words, actions and experiences.

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This is my core spiritual work now. It's really, really difficult, but it's also exciting and transforming. I see and experience the world so differently now. When I first was exposed to intersectionality, I know there was a sense of “holy cats.” It just looked like a minefield—a million different ways to be a “bad person.” Sure, maybe I was checking my racial privilege pretty well, but crud—I was making heteronormative assumptions right and left. Or maybe I had done some good work understanding and appreciating my cis privilege, but then I carelessly referred to some public personality as “crazy.”

But here's what I've learned: doing anti-oppression work is not about being “good” or “bad.” And it's not constricting, or at least not for long. It's *liberating*. I'm always learning; I am always making mistakes, and this work is not about me. It's about being part of a world where really hearing and listening to different voices creates something that simply isn't possible any other way. It is a bright road I am walking toward justice.

But what about anger? This is perhaps the first and most important thing I learned when working in intersectional space: oppression makes people

angry—which is a healthy, reasonable response to oppression. And it is *not* the job of someone experiencing oppression to moderate for the comfort of those either being oppressive or benefiting from oppression. In discussions and debates on the internet, discomfort with anger and the attempts of others to control the expression of outrage is called “tone policing.”

Tone policing is frankly a central feature of white, middle-and-upper class, educated, and more frequently, liberal interactions. It deeply assumes that when working together, everyone should make nice and be comfortable. By which we mean, people who don't conform to the dominant cultural norms need to change or get lost.

Dominant cultural norms mean *be white, be straight, be cis, speak in the language of middle and upper class white English speaking people, be able bodied, and do not expect accommodations for any illness you may have, mental or otherwise*. Also, we often basically expect you to have some disposable income. Or, you know, income. And housing. Those are the assumptions that are in place, especially when we do not discuss them.

So back to tone policing, which takes place when we tell someone that they need to express themselves more nicely. That they will get farther with us and everyone else if they are polite. That they should not express their anger because we are—I am—not the direct cause of that anger. (As an aside, as soon as I do that, even if I wasn't a direct cause of the anger or oppression before, I just became an oppressive source in that moment.)

Here's what I have learned in intersectional space: that I am responsible for myself—for my own choices, words, actions and experiences. When I make a mistake, it's my job to take responsibility for it and make appropriate changes. Making mistakes does not make me a bad person. It makes me a learning person. If someone lets me

know that I am making racist, classist, sexist, genderist, ableist assumptions, my job is to listen and learn, not to get defensive and explain myself and declare that what I'm saying is really OK because I have good intentions. Most of all, my job, when others are sharing their experiences of the world, is to listen and try to understand. It's definitely not my job to tell them that their experience didn't happen or they probably misunderstood.

When we recognize privilege, people of good will often begin an important kind of work: the work of being an ally. When we have privilege, that means that we are heard, seen, and have power in some situation. The first and most important work of being an ally is to listen and understand, and then see how we can leverage our own power so it is shared with those who are marginalized.

Anti-oppression work is not about me or you and how good we are. It is about understanding the reality of oppression and trying our best to understand what people who are oppressed need so that *they themselves* can have power and influence over their own experience.

Be bold in doing justice. Know that anger is a part of the work. Remember your privilege. Remember that being a good ally means it's not about you. And thank you—for everything you do, every time you try, and for bringing your experience to the table of humanity. ■

At the CLF we strive to be a public voice for justice and to curate a conversation that leads to deeper understanding of how we can build a more just world. Your dollars help us continue to be a light for justice. Please make your contribution of \$100, or give what you can, by visiting [www.clfu.org/give](http://www.clfu.org/give) or by calling 1-800-231-3027.



## Justice Behind Bars

*Three of our CLF prisoner members wrote pieces for Quest Monthly on the theme of Justice. What follows are excerpts from these pieces.*

by **Jim, CLF Prisoner Member**

You might think that as one of two million incarcerated men and women in the United States of America I would have strong opinions about “Justice” and some intense emotional feelings about it.

You would be correct. It is only with a very little humor and tongue-in-cheek I and others like me will tell you “there is so little justice in the system it is criminal.” I once believed in and followed the American justice system from an early age. I learned it in school and in society, or so I had thought. It was not until I fell afoul of the law that I became intimately familiar with the workings of the system.

The CLF and its Prison Ministry are making some baby steps to review and improve our “justice” system. We need to do more. Members of congregations should make efforts to go into jails and prisons to mentor and counsel incarcerated men and women. Ministers or other congregation/fellowship leaders should contact prison chaplains to volunteer to lead services and meet the inmates.

Let's bring our vision of justice close to home. ■

by **Russell, CLF Prisoner Member**

Justice is supposed to mean putting right what is wrong. Justice is meant to help those who cannot, and/or should not help themselves.

I do not advocate breaking the law. I have done that and have learned a very valuable lesson from doing so. But justice is fleeting—there one minute, gone the next. Where you may receive it, the next may not.

One man may enter a courtroom and receive five years and the next five months, both for the same crime. Yet if an officer of the law were to be charged, it would likely end in suspension for three months. The poor who can't afford fast-talking attorneys are left with people who work shoulder-to-shoulder with the prosecution.

But everyone is equal. We all deserve justice the same way. ■

by **Jack, CLF Prisoner Member**

Conflict arises when *justice* becomes *just-us*, when justice is defined by judging others according to how much they act or look like “us.” We administer justice to demand conformity to a perceived norm of the moment, the time, the decade, the age.

The Old Testament of the Bible set down the command to “do justice, love righteousness, and walk humbly with our God.” The New Testament set down the commandment to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. So many of us are so different. Can we cease judging others as to whether they are “just-us”? Could we all walk humbly with our God, hand in hand, lifting up those who need a helping hand to join us on our walk? ■





## From Your Minister

BY MEG RILEY  
SENIOR MINISTER,  
CHURCH OF THE  
LARGER FELLOWSHIP

When it comes to justice-makers on the front lines, one group of people often shows up—mothers. And when mothers truly know that, as the saying goes, “there’s no such thing as other people’s children,” I believe we have the power to accomplish anything.

Consider Harry Potter, that young wizard. It was his mother’s love that saved him—only him—from the wrath of the evil Voldemort. As the wise wizard Dumbledore noted, “Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn’t realize that love as powerful as your mother’s for you leaves its own mark.”

Frederick Douglass’ mother walked twelve miles in the night to simply lie beside his young body after he was sold away from her. Love that powerful leaves its own mark.

The power of Mamie Till’s love for her murdered son Emmett led her to courageously insist that his tortured body be viewed in an open casket. This caused thousands of people, especially Black people, to see (with one another, in community) the obscene physical result of racism in 1955. It was a foundational moment in the Civil Rights Movement, just as social media images are waking up many people today. Though many people tried to talk Mamie Till out of doing this, no future threat of violence was worse to her than the suffering she was already undergoing. Love that powerful leaves its own mark.

There are, of course, iconic moments when mothers directly influenced history. Phoebe Ensminger Burn, the mom of a young Tennessee legislator, pressured that son, Harry Burn, to “be

a good boy” and cast the tie-breaking vote in favor of women’s suffrage. Tennessee’s vote for suffrage created enough states’ affirmative votes to add the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Good boy, Harry!

In my lifetime, the raging grief of Cindy Sheehan, whose son Casey died in the Iraq war in 2004, finally broke the impenetrable bubble of silencing protection around criticism of that war. Millions and millions of people around the globe had protested the US invasion of Iraq, but the media barely acknowledged resistance (and social media was just emerging). Sheehan’s bottomless grief, embodied as she camped out for weeks outside of President Bush’s compound in Texas, put a human face on the resistance to war that mainstream media finally championed. No force can stop the voice of a grieving mother. Love that powerful leaves its mark.

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### No force can stop the voice of a grieving mother.

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Mothers’ grief and courage has been a large part of resistance movements globally. The Mothers of the Missing dared speak out about those being disappeared daily by the Junta in Argentina. Mothers have engaged in campaigns in opposition to handguns, GMOs, global climate change, mass incarceration (and specifically the war on drugs in the U.S.), drunk driving, and dozens of other problems that create lack of safety for children.

For many, motherhood brings a ferocity, an animal strength. We would much rather suffer ourselves than watch our children suffer, whether from health issues, oppression, or even the ordinary miseries of childhood. And, of course, I am not speaking only of biological mothers here. Anyone who deeply loves and cares for a child

feels that bond, that willingness to sacrifice self without a second thought if it’s necessary to protect the child.

“There’s no such thing as other people’s children.” If we believed that, how could we allow so many children to work in sweatshops, live in poverty, die of starvation? If we believe that, how then can we harness our love for all of humanity?

In 1870 Unitarian Julia Ward Howe publically called for a Mother’s Day for Peace. The words of her Mother’s Day Proclamation are found in the UU hymnal and are often read during Mother’s Day services. The proclamation begins, “Arise, then, women of this day!”

It continues: “We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies.... We women of one country will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs.” It advises a time for women to gather to strategize, to “solemnly take counsel with each other as the means whereby the great human family can live in peace.”

Media and policy makers do all they can to trivialize and dismiss the power of women, but it can’t be killed. I think of my own mother, who instilled in me my own passion for justice. Had she been born twenty years later, I am confident she would have run for office rather than serve as a high school teacher. She gave me the drive to be an activist and celebrated the opportunities I had which she did not.

And now, as I watch my own child come into young adulthood with a ferocious commitment to justice, I know that of any legacy I could leave, this is the one that means the most to me.

This justice-making is an intergenerational activity. It includes people of all ages, races, genders, abilities and methodologies. It includes people in prison and people in the outside world. But for this month, let’s just take a moment and honor the mothers! ■

## REsources for Living

BY LYNN UNGAR, MINISTER FOR LIFESPAN LEARNING, CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP

In her column, Rev. Meg talks about how mothers have a special urge toward justice, born out of a fierce love for their children that demands a world where those children—all children—can be safe and respected. I think that she's right. Our love for our kids does move us to try to build the world that they deserve. But you know who else I think has a special call toward making justice in the world? The children themselves.

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**Building justice is the work of a lifetime—which means that it doesn't start when we're already grown.**

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If you are a parent, how often have you heard the wailing cry, "But it's not *FAIR*"? If you are a kid, those words might sound familiar as something that comes out of your own mouth. I think children have a natural understanding that life should be fair, and that it isn't right that some people get special privileges that others don't.

Now, a lot of the time, the cry *It's not FAIR* happens when a child feels offended that they're missing out on something that another kid has gotten. But children, for the most part, really get that fair is fair, that the rules should be structured so that everyone gets an equal chance. And they have a gut-deep sense of the wrong when a person or group of people is treated unfairly.

For those of us who are parents, teaching our kids to be justice-loving, justice-making people is not so much about convincing children that justice matters as it is about giving them the



tools to live out that love of justice in the world. I don't have the ABCs of justice-making

to give you, but here are a few "A's" at least:

### Analysis

Children need to learn how to interpret what they are told, what they read, what they see on TV or social media or video games. So practice talking back to media. Point out when ads demean women or trivialize fathers. Comment on the news if you have it on the radio in the car. Ask about the assumptions made by song lyrics or TV characters.

Ask about what they learn in school. Does the history that they are taught include perspectives and contributions from those who didn't come out on top? Offer resources that give a more complete picture. But more than anything, teach kids to ask questions and not assume that what they see in any given text book or movie or magazine is a complete picture.

### Alliance

Children get that we need each other. They understand that it's a lot easier to stick up for yourself if you have someone who is standing with you, so help them learn how to stand with others. Role-play ways you might help someone who is being bullied by standing with them or diverting the conversation. Practice sticking up for people by saying things like, "That joke isn't fair to...(girls, Mexicans, gay people, etc.) and I don't think it's funny."

Help them to speak from their experience of connection: "That's silly to say that all Muslims are terrorists. My doctor is Muslim, and she certainly isn't a terrorist." "I don't like it when people make fun of gay people. My uncles are gay, and they're great." "If Jordan says he's a boy, he's a boy. My parents' friend Susan used to be Jack, but now she's Susan. It's not that hard to call people what they want to be called." And make sure that your own family circle of friends

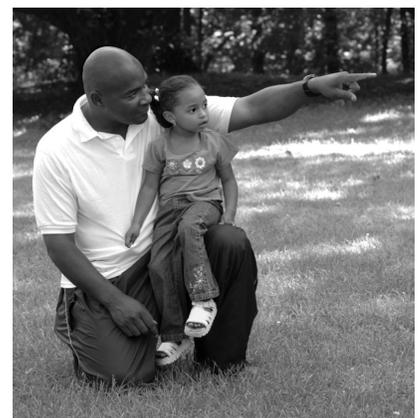
is broad enough that your kids have a wide range of connections to draw on.

### Assurance

One of the most crucial pieces of justice-making for people of any age is trusting that our voice matters, and that we have the strength and courage to speak out for what we know is right even in the face of people who will yell at us or worse. Listen whole-heartedly when your child talks to you about a perceived injustice. Help them to analyze the situation and what they see going on. And then support them in moving toward a solution rather than feeling that you need to solve it for them. Help them figure out what a good outcome would look like, what steps might move them toward that outcome and what resources would help them to take those steps.

And let them know you will be cheering them on as they take the steps themselves, learning from both positive and negative experiences. Encourage them to try things and find out that even the hard pieces of life really don't break us.

Building justice is the work of a lifetime—which means that it doesn't start when we're already grown. Our children aren't just the ones who will be the justice makers of the future; they are also an essential part of the vast web of people, in every part of the world, who are working for justice right now. We can help and guide them, but sometimes the best we can do is to allow ourselves to be inspired and challenged and led. ■





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## Breathe

BY LYNN UNGAR,  
MINISTER FOR LIFESPAN LEARNING,  
CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP

*Breathe*, said the wind.

How can I breathe at a time like this,  
when the air is full of the smoke  
of burning tires, burning lives?

*Just breathe*, the wind insisted.

Easy for you to say, if the weight of  
injustice is not wrapped around your throat,  
cutting off all air.

*I need you to breathe.*

*I need you to breathe.*

Don't tell me to be calm  
when there are so many reasons  
to be angry, so much cause for despair!



*I didn't say to be calm*, said the wind,  
*I said to breathe.*  
*We're going to need a lot of air*  
*to make this hurricane together.* ■

*Lynn's book of poetry, Bread and Other Miracles,*  
*is available through her website,*  
*[www.lynnungar.com](http://www.lynnungar.com), or through Amazon.*

