

The background is a vibrant yellow with a dense, overlapping collage of various protest signs and slogans in different fonts, sizes, and orientations. Some legible signs include "SAY THEIR NAMES", "BLACK LIVES MATTER", "NO MORE SILENCE", "POWER TO THE PEOPLE", "NO", "I CAN'T BREATHE", and "I CAN'T BREATHE". The overall effect is one of active resistance and social movement.

RESIST

(Like Jesus)

SOJOURNERS

WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE?

BY ROSE MARIE BERGER

In Christian tradition, social justice is a virtue that we practice together to live out Jesus' primary command: "Love God and love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31).

"Justice" is a moral code that guides a fair and equitable society. When an individual acts on behalf of justice, they stand up for what is right and good. "Charity" is a basic sense of generosity toward others, especially those who suffer and those without social power. Individual charity is when one responds to the immediate needs of another—for example, volunteering in a women's shelter or a food distribution program.

The goal of charity and social justice is to advance the "common good" (something that is shared and beneficial for all or most members of a community). Charity addresses the effects of social sin, while social justice addresses the causes of social sin.

Social justice requires individual Christians to act in organized groups to hold unjust institutions and systems—both government and private—accountable to the common good. Actions for social justice must always be partnered with love and respect for human dignity. Otherwise, they can become legalistic and cruel.

So, how do we act for lasting change? First, we identify an injustice. Then, we gather a group to listen to and observe the experiences of those closest to the problem. Together with those closest to the problem, we look at the context. What's the history and what are the root causes? We take the expanded information (experience plus context) and examine it with biblical values and Christian teaching (What would Jesus do? What would Jesus definitely not do?).

Then, we ask: What action might successfully make this situation more

just over the long term? Finally, we take the action and evaluate the results. The evaluation takes us back to step one.

Social justice almost always has economic, as well as policy, components. Our lives are organized around basic goods and services that we exchange to grow as healthy human beings in families and communities. When we listen to the experiences of poor people in the United States, we learn that many are working full time but can't afford the basics of food, housing, and health care. The context includes spiraling costs of medical insurance and inadequate wages for workers.

We reflect on the experience and context in the light of Jesus' healing ministry and Jesus' parable of the worker getting a just wage (Matthew 20:1-16). Such analysis has given rise to campaigns for universal health care and for workers getting a fair share of the profits of their labor.

Success is evaluated by how the lives of America's working poor have improved. Have these actions helped to restore justice and human dignity to reveal more clearly the reign of God?

Remember, every human action impacts others, for good or for ill. As Christians, we practice virtues such as social justice so that we build habits that are good for all.

Rose Marie Berger senior editor of *Sojourners* magazine, is a Catholic peace activist and poet.

THE
GOAL OF
CHARITY
AND
SOCIAL
JUSTICE
IS TO
ADVANCE
"THE
COMMON
GOOD"

**JESUS
RESISTED
EMPIRE
— AND *SO*
MUST
WE**

**BY
REV. ADAM
RUSSELL
TAYLOR**



We look to Jesus as our ultimate example of how to work for justice during oppressive and unjust times.



Born as a lowly peasant during the oppressive Roman Empire, Jesus embodied the love that God has for all people. His mother, Mary, heralded his birth as an event that “brought down the powerful from their thrones” and instead “lifted up the lowly” (Luke 1:52).

In his ministry, Jesus proclaimed a gospel that was good news for those who lacked power—the poor, the sick, the imprisoned (Luke 4:18). In a symbolic act of defiance, he overturned the tables in the temple when religious leaders and merchants were cheating the poor (John 2:13-25).

When the religious and political leaders of the day saw his message as a threat, Jesus ultimately gave his very life to subvert the brutality of the cross into the promise of salvation and liberation.

Early Christians faced difficult choices about how to resist empire’s demands. Today, we too need to consider how to put our faith into practice in society, especially since many leaders have misused and weaponized Christian faith to justify their pursuit of power and wealth.

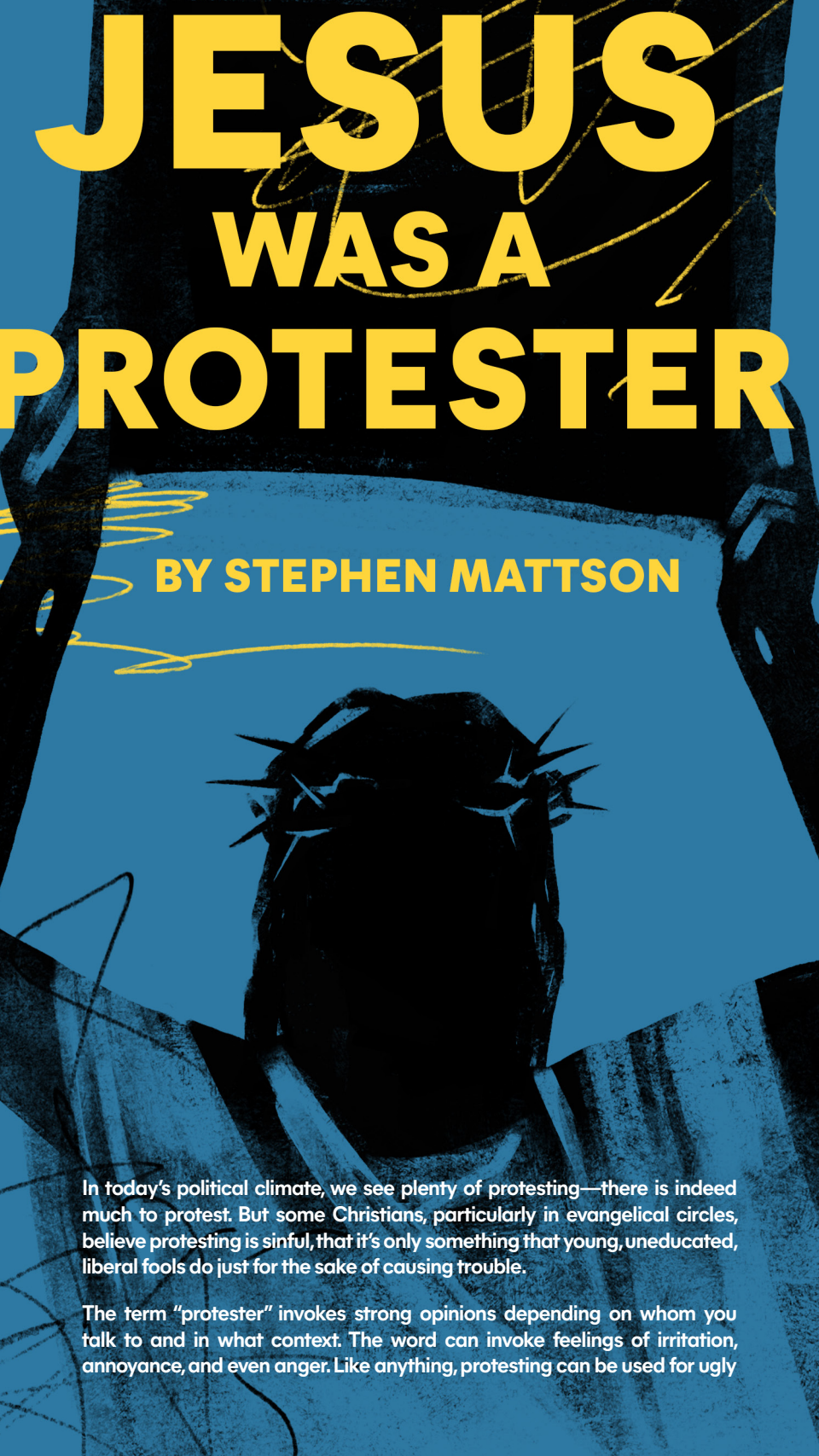
This might sound like a mountain too tall to climb. However, history shows us that faithful resistance can bend what Martin Luther King Jr. called “the moral arc of the universe” toward justice—when people of faith refuse to give up.

As Christians and as the church, we are one body with many parts, with different gifts and roles to play. We can put our faith into action through mutual aid and hands-on service ministry in our local communities. We can participate in civic life by contacting our elected representatives, participating in a protest or demonstration, and of course by voting and encouraging others to vote.

Every action, no matter how large or small, is important and can inspire greater acts of courage.

Rev. Adam Russell Taylor is president of Sojourners and author of *A More Perfect Union: A New Vision for Building the Beloved Community*.

JESUS WAS A PROTESTER

A stylized illustration of Jesus with a crown of thorns, set against a blue background with yellow scribbles. The image is a vertical poster or book cover. The top half features the title 'JESUS WAS A PROTESTER' in large, bold, yellow capital letters. Below the title, the author's name 'BY STEPHEN MATTSON' is written in smaller, bold, yellow capital letters. The bottom half of the image shows a dark, textured silhouette of Jesus' head and shoulders, wearing a crown of thorns. The background is a solid blue color with various yellow scribbles and lines, giving it a hand-drawn or protest-art feel.

BY STEPHEN MATTSON

In today's political climate, we see plenty of protesting—there is indeed much to protest. But some Christians, particularly in evangelical circles, believe protesting is sinful, that it's only something that young, uneducated, liberal fools do just for the sake of causing trouble.

The term "protester" invokes strong opinions depending on whom you talk to and in what context. The word can invoke feelings of irritation, annoyance, and even anger. Like anything, protesting can be used for ugly



and horrific purposes—and proper protest is not meant to invoke, or be motivated by, hate, rage, violence, and vengeance (i.e., Westboro Baptist Church, white supremacists, etc.).

If Christians are honest with themselves about the gospel message of Jesus, they should know that protesting can be a holy act of righteousness.

Protesting is the antithesis of being apathetic, complicit, callous, and passive, and Christians should take comfort in the fact that Jesus—the son of God—was very good at it.

Sometimes Jesus did this quietly, and other times it was provocative and publicly disruptive. But there's no doubt that Jesus was a radical, a person who was eventually arrested, beaten, and sacrificed on a cross because of his words and actions.

Within the Christian life, there may be times when God calls us to complement our prayer with protesting, and throughout the Bible we see how Jesus purposefully intervened, acted, spoke, and was present in various situations to protest, dissent, demonstrate, question, defend, revolt, and challenge. Here are a few examples:

When Jesus spent 40 days and nights in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), he rejected the temptation of worldly power and boldly stood against Satan's temptations—because Jesus was a protester.

When Jesus stormed into the temple courts, overturned tables, and drove both people and animals out of the room using a whip, he was condemning the greed and corruption of religious hypocrites—because Jesus was a protester (John 2:13-25).

Jesus boldly stood up and spoke in the synagogue, proclaiming things so countercultural and radical that a mob became so furious at him they eventually chased him with the intention of killing him—because Jesus was a protester (Luke 4:16-31).

Christianity isn't political power, military might, safety, wealth, control, fame, or comfort—it's emulating Jesus. After Jesus departed and the disciples started their various ministries, founding the church as we know it today, most of the earliest believers were ruthlessly hunted down, arrested, persecuted, and horrifically killed for following Jesus, martyred for being divine protesters.

Defending the gospel for the sake of humanity—people loved and created in the image of God—was the reason Jesus protested. Are we willing to do the same? God help us.

Stephen Mattson is the author of *On Love and Mercy: A Social Justice Devotional*. This is an excerpt from "Jesus Was a Protester," sojo.net.



EMBRACING JOY WHILE

When Immigration and Customs Enforcement activity recently increased dramatically in Chicago and surrounding suburbs, faith leaders organized a surge of solidarity to protect immigrant communities. Alongside a deep pride for their city, some of the organized actions share a critical motif: Joy.

"We're called to be constantly rejoicing," Rev. Juan Pablo Herrera, a pastor at Urban Village Church in Wicker Park, told *Sojourners*. "It's a spiritual strength that we can have in times of negativity coming against us, that we can choose to live with joy as a way of defying the forces of principality."

Demonstrators are taking the idea of community action beyond chants and protest signs. Protesters regularly set up food tables and spend time crafting, praying, and singing with each other between active protests. A particularly powerful chant that stood out to Aronson, directed at ICE agents, was, "Love your neighbor, love your God, save your soul, and quit your job."

As it happens, the chant is a protesting crowd-pleaser. Rev. David Black, a senior minister at The First Presbyterian Church of Chicago, mentioned the same chant as he recalled singing with his close friend and other protesters in front of the ICE facility in Broadview, Ill.

"Joy is one of the fruits of the spirit, and so when we are showing joy, even to people who aren't consciously looking for the fruits of the spirit in a protest, people instinctively understand that ... they're seeing something that is deeply rooted in good and reconciled humanity," Black said.

But that joy does not paper over the pain of witnessing and experiencing ICE raids, arrests, and sometimes death. Black said the experience of grief



RESISTING INJUSTICE

By Tate Young

is as much a part of resistance as is joy. He said embracing deep fears and griefs is an avenue of spiritual liberation accessible to detainees and ICE officers alike. He feels called to demonstrate the grief and joy by putting his own body on the line.

"When Jesus saw evil in the world, he didn't just preach about it in the synagogues," Black said. "He put his body in the way, and because of that, because he allowed his body to be destroyed by that evil, the power of that evil was broken. And while I don't think it's a Christian's responsibility to be martyred or to do what Jesus did in that particular way, I do think it's a really important witness of the gospel that Christians have an opportunity to model, at least symbolically, by doing what Jesus did in that moment—putting our bodies in the way of evil."

The ICE agents' use of force has not deterred Black from his principled approach, which he said is derived from his deep faith and supported by the overwhelming solidarity he has experienced in the protest efforts.

"We are preaching the liberation of the captives and the release of the oppressed," Black said. "We're bringing this message of hope and love. Just like Jesus, trying to model his witness and ministry and the way he didn't flinch when that preaching was met with violence."

Tate Young is a reporter and participant in the Sojourners Fall 2025 Journalism Cohort. This is adapted from "Chicago Faith Communities Say 'Joy' Is Key to Resisting the Feds," sojo.net.

STILL, WE VOTE

By Delonte Gholston

In the Black community, voting has always been complicated.

We voted and yet you lynched us.

We voted and yet you incarcerated us.

We voted and you poisoned our water.

We voted and you tested your nerve gas on our soldiers.

We voted and you dissected, poked, and prodded our women's bodies as though they were little more than lab rats.

We voted and you redlined us into segregated cities that you knew were in flood zones, too close to the power plant, polluted with brown fields and toxic waste.

We voted but you taxed and gentrified us out of the cities to which we fled to seek asylum from the scourge of racial terrorism.

We voted in our own officials, bankers, barbers, beauticians, teachers, preachers, educators, and scientists, but you bombed and burned our Black Wall Streets to the ground. Then you voted to build a highway through it.

We voted, and you called us "super predators" after we told you we needed better employment, better education, better health care for our sick and elderly, and land to plant and harvest healthy foods and vegetables. ...



**For us, voting has
always been
complicated.**

Yet, we vote. ...

**We vote as an act
of resistance to your
wicked schemes of
voter suppression, poll taxes, bubble gum
tests, racist robocalls, and kicking our senior
citizens off their buses as they headed to the
polls. ...**

**We vote because we believe in ourselves,
love ourselves, value ourselves, and refuse to
let somebody else make decisions that will
impact the communities where our babies
and our elders have to live.**

**We vote because we know you were betting
on us staying home. In your face. We're
voting.**

**We vote because we believe power is a gift
to be shared that can create vibrancy
and hope in the very communities you
tried to erase.**

**We vote not because we put our trust in
America, but because we trust God.**

**We vote not because we believe in you,
but because we believe in ourselves. ...**

**We vote because we refuse to let you speak
for us.**

**We vote because we are expressing our commitment to a
future that is not yet here.**

**We vote because, although voting for us has always
been complicated, it still matters.**

So we vote.

Delonte Gholston is lead pastor at Peace Fellowship Church, a multicultural, multi-socioeconomic community in the Deanwood neighborhood of Washington, D.C. This is excerpted from "Still, We Vote," sojo.net.

EQUALS
FREEDOM

**“ We vote
because
we
refuse to
let you
speak
for us.
”**



CALLING OUR REPRESENTATIVES IS AN ACT OF FAITH

By Hannah Keziah Agustin

Do you ever wonder if calling your representatives makes a difference? Do you ever wonder if prayer yields fruit? Considering all the injustice in the world, I think those are fair questions to ponder.

Since last October, I've spent many nights crouched over the bed with my phone on loudspeaker. I've been calling my representatives for the passing of H.R. 786, a congressional resolution that urges "an immediate de-escalation and cease-fire in Israel and occupied Palestine." This has been my daily practice.

I wait for the voicemail's beep, clear my throat, and read the cease-fire call script through my 5 Calls app. The act of calling my representatives feels liturgical with its methodical repetition, its language filled with conviction, and its capacity to imagine a future where Palestine is free and violence is not the rule of the land. It is prayerful in its hopefulness, and as a Christian, it has taught me to rely more on the sovereignty of Jesus over injustice. ...

Before I understood anything about theology, group prayer taught me that using our voices collectively can produce a spirit of longevity. When we use our voices together, we are

reminded that we are not alone in our struggles.

It is easy to feel isolated and powerless when watching a genocide via our phones and TV screens. This is exacerbated by the reality that I am an immigrant who cannot vote but pays taxes to the U.S.—which sends \$3.3 billion in military equipment and services to Israel annually. Despite not being able to vote, I still believe I have a responsibility to participate in the U.S. political system. So, calling my representatives is not just a civic duty, but also an act of faith. It is similar to prayer because it requires an unwavering trust that we are heard when we call and that the one who is listening to us on the other end of the line can do something beyond our individual capabilities. ...

My voice, albeit singular and small, is not alone. Instead, I am joined by many others who have also been raising their voices to call for justice and liberation for Palestinians. Calling our representatives reminds us to put our hope in the power of our collective voice and the belief that small steps of faith can change things. To paraphrase the words of Mother Teresa, we are called to do little things with great love.

Hannah Keziah Agustin was an opinion writer for the Spring 2024 Sojourners Journalism Cohort. This is excerpted from ["Calling Our Representatives Is an Act of Faith,"](#) sojo.net.

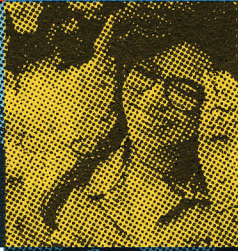


"My

voice,



albeit



singular



and



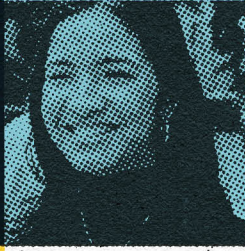
small,



is



not



alone."



Hannah
Keziah
Agustin

CIRCLE OF JUSTICE

God calls us and empowers us to make a **positive difference** in the world. When all of us get involved in some way, change happens. There are three parts to putting your **faith into action** for social justice, and they work together:

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

The quiet and peace we find in our spiritual practices help us connect with our inner selves and help us listen to the path God is guiding us to follow.

Here are a few examples of spiritual practices: prayer, meditation, nature walks, art, journaling, poetry, music, exercise, service.

When do you feel most at peace?

ACTION

Actions don't have to be big to make a difference: Using kind words, challenging biased comments, or reaching out to someone who might be struggling are all ways to live out God's call for mercy and justice in the world.

Here are some other ideas: Join or start a school club, volunteer for a one-day service project, call or write your elected representatives, care for the environment, attend a school board meeting.

What's one small thing you could try this week?



EXPLORATION

Each of us has our own unique talents, interests, and strengths that grow and build over time. Stay curious: Notice when something interests you, and ask questions!

Here are some ways to help discover your part: Take a class, try a new hobby, read the online news for your city.

What issues do you care about?

These three aspects strengthen each other over time. Action leads us back to spiritual practice for renewal. Our practices give us **clarity to act**. And taking action reveals new gifts we didn't know we had.

Start wherever you are—with a quiet moment, a burning question, or a small act of kindness. **Trust that your contribution matters.**

For more, visit
SOJO.NET/RESIST

Want to share or print more copies
of this zine? Scan this QR code:



CONTRIBUTORS:

Sandra Sims / Senior Director of Marketing
Laura Kirk / Circulation Assistant
Ryan McQuade / Multimedia Graphic Designer
Betsy Shirley / Editor in Chief
Rose Marie Berger / Senior Editor, Sojourners magazine
Josina Guess / Associate Editor

GRAPHIC ATTRIBUTIONS:

Teemu Paananen / Unsplash
Zaur Ibrahimov / Unsplash
Patrick Fore / Unsplash
Mélodie Descoubes / Unsplash
Aaron Burden / Unsplash
GPA Photo Archive / Flickr
Katelyn Perry / Unsplash
Cindy Shebley / Flickr

Frankie Cordoba / Unsplash
Cristian Castillo / Unsplash
vale / Unsplash
Lawrence Chismorie / Unsplash
Sincerely Media / Unsplash
Library of Congress / Unsplash
Austin Granger / Flickr