

NO JUSTICE
NO PEACE

SOJOURNERS



HOPE



IS AN



ACTION



WORD



**A zine on faith and justice
for the 2024 election and beyond.**



Should I vote?



Is anyone struggling with this like I am?

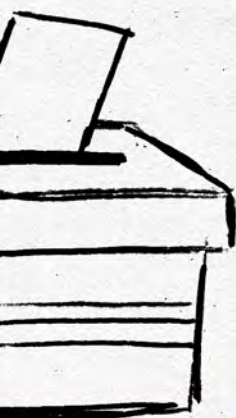
Why should I vote?



How would Jesus vote?



Should I be a single-issue voter?



What does it mean to be a progressive Christian?



Do all Christians have to vote the same way?

Should I not vote?



Does my vote support genocide?

How do we actually build a better world?

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INTRODUCTION

If you're like us, the 2024 election has brought up a mix of emotions that play on a continuous loop. With every scroll, it seems like there's a new thing to grieve and add to our running list of concerns. We find ourselves in a place that feels endlessly heavy.

Maybe this election season, you're asking yourself questions like: Should I vote/not vote? *Why* should I vote? How would Jesus vote? How do I vote in a way that honors my conscience and my faith? Do all Christians have to vote the same way? I believe Palestine should be free, does my vote support genocide? Should I be a single-issue voter? What will happen after the election? What is my role then? What does it mean to be a progressive Christian? How do we actually build a better world and see the kingdom of God on earth? Is anyone else out there struggling with this like I am?

This zine is an offering of solidarity for this election season and beyond. We're people, just like you, trying to figure out how to make faith-rooted political decisions despite our changing democracy. In this zine, you'll find perspectives on grief and hope, the United States' complicated voting history, and ways to protect democracy and make an actionable difference. Our hope is that wherever you find yourself, after reading you'll look up and see not only that you're not alone, but that there's a community of believers alongside you, committed to building a better world.

— The Editors





"My

voice,



albeit



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and



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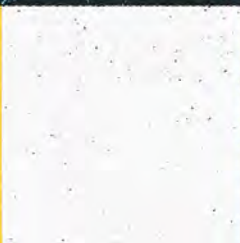
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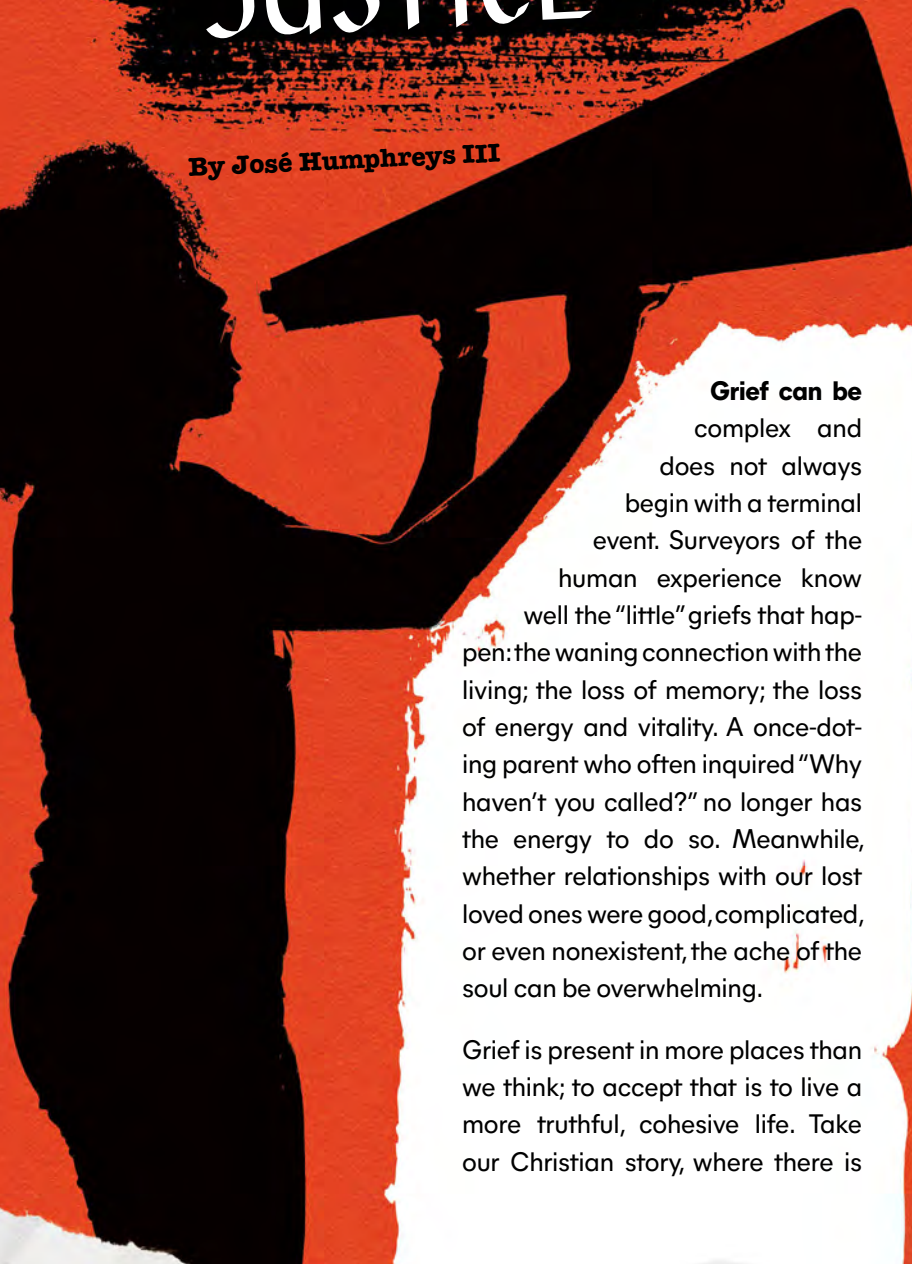
alone."



Hannah
Keziah
Agustin

OUR GRIEF CAN FUEL JUSTICE

By José Humphreys III

A black silhouette of a person's head and shoulders in profile, facing right. They are holding a large, dark megaphone to their mouth with both hands. The background is a vibrant orange-red color with a white, torn-paper-like border on the right side where the text is located.

Grief can be complex and does not always begin with a terminal event. Surveyors of the human experience know well the “little” griefs that happen: the waning connection with the living; the loss of memory; the loss of energy and vitality. A once-doting parent who often inquired “Why haven’t you called?” no longer has the energy to do so. Meanwhile, whether relationships with our lost loved ones were good, complicated, or even nonexistent, the ache of the soul can be overwhelming.

Grief is present in more places than we think; to accept that is to live a more truthful, cohesive life. Take our Christian story, where there is

no Resurrection Sunday without Good Friday. If we focus on Good Friday alone, we are left with the despair of death and injustice. Focus on Resurrection Sunday alone, and our hope is diluted by brittle optimism. Hold these two together, and we find that in the sober reality of finitude, a new and beautiful hope can break the husk and blossom forth in our lives. ...

Both micro and macro griefs can be animating forces for good. Take the atrocities in Gaza and the increasing minority of global voices declaring outrage against the killing of thousands of innocents. The power of grief, I find, can cut through "tepid neutrality" so that collective outrage can find a concerted voice and, hopefully, a concerted effort toward justice.

THE POWER
OF GRIEF
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Our personal formation depends on how we hold grief and journey with it. Grief can fuel acts of justice and help us reimagine a more whole world. Daily, we hold a myriad of losses, small and great. Yet grief can have the effect, as author Peter Scazzero put it, to "enlarge your soul." In this elasticity we grow to love more, bear more, and heal more."

José Humphreys III is author of *Seeing Jesus in East Harlem: What Happens When Churches Show Up and Stay Put* and co-author of *Ecosystems of Jubilee: Economic Ethics for the Neighborhood* (Zondervan, 2023). This is excerpted from "[The Alchemy of Grief and Hope](#)," *Sojourners*, April 2024.



Representative

Dorinda Williams

is a member of Faith



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.

What Can Our Vote Do, Anyway?

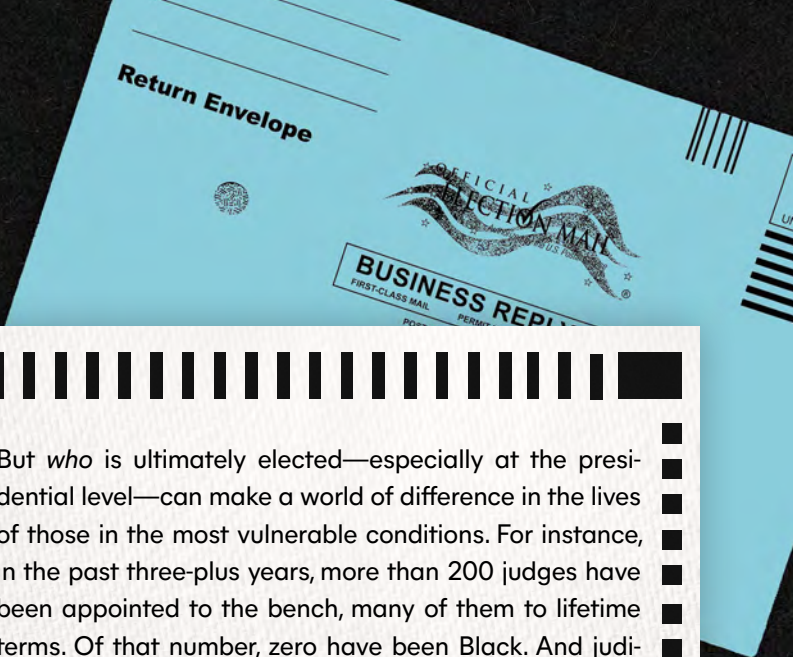


By Jim Rice



People offer many reasons for not voting, from “one vote doesn’t matter” and “there’s no real difference between the parties” to the conviction that an election “won’t bring about real justice (or the reign of God).”

The latter, at least, is certainly true. Voting—even electing the best-available candidates for the most important positions in government—definitely won’t bring about the peaceable kingdom.



But *who* is ultimately elected—especially at the presidential level—can make a world of difference in the lives of those in the most vulnerable conditions. For instance, in the past three-plus years, more than 200 judges have been appointed to the bench, many of them to lifetime terms. Of that number, zero have been Black. And judicial appointment is only one of many powers in executive hands, which affect everything from education, housing, and immigration policies to whether our society makes the hard choices of confronting racialized policing and combating climate change.

People of faith can't forgo civic responsibility—which includes the ballot box—with claims of apathy or that they're not impacted by "politics," because what happens in the public sphere, of which partisan politics is only one piece, has consequences for everyone. And while some have the privilege (or illusion) of being protected from structures of injustice and destructive public policies, many more people are afflicted by them. But more important, disciples of Jesus have the mandate to act in ways that consciously treat those in the most marginalized situations as bearers of God's divine image. In other words, Christians are called to live, and vote, mindful of the left out and left behind.

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. ”



How We Can Protect Democracy

By Maria J. Stephan

Pray together.

Prayer fosters spiritual imagination, bravery, compassion, and an ability to hold fast to truth amid disinformation. World Vision offers [6 ways to pray for our country during the election](#). The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention also offers a [prayer guide](#). Sojourners has election [litany and prayers](#), ready for sharing on social media. Texas Impact collected [interreligious prayers](#) to use during an election season. ...

Learn together how authoritarian movements work.

Protect Democracy's [The Authoritarian Playbook](#), Just Security's [American Autocracy Threat Tracker](#), and United to Protect Democracy's [The Authoritarian Playbook for 2025](#) may inform your conversations. The International Center on Nonviolent Conflict offers online [democracy courses](#) in several languages.

Encourage voting and civic engagement.

Encourage voting and civic engagement by teaching about pro-democratic norms and values through sermons, bulletins, and other communications channels. Name the values that guide Christian engagement in politics. [Faiths United to Save Democracy](#) has several resources for faith communities. ...

Offer training to provide accompaniment.

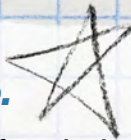


Provide training for protective accompaniment at the polls to deter threats and intimidation. Become congregational "poll chaplains" with the [Faiths United to Save Democracy](#) team. Train your communities in effective, strategic nonviolent action, consistent with our deepest held religious beliefs. [DC Peace Team](#) and [Pace e Bene](#) offer trainings. ...

Prepare for the day after the election.

Watch and discuss the documentary [War Game](#) where a bipartisan group of U.S. defense, intelligence, and elected policymakers participate in an unscripted role-play exercise on political violence in a contested election. With communities across political and religious differences, develop a plan for advancing democratic norms *after* the election. The North Carolina Council of Churches developed a [Sacred Conversations](#) toolkit on becoming a trauma-informed faith community for shaping pastoral responses during crises. Talk about [post-election stress](#) from the pulpit. Make a pledge to stay off social media for a day. [Choose Democracy](#) prepares Americans to respond in the case of an undemocratic power grab (as we experienced in January 2021), particularly between November elections and a January presidential inauguration. ...

Democratize life.



Reducing the threat of authoritarianism and building an inclusive democracy must be woven into every part of our civic life and have a long-term strategy. The Kairos Center and MoveOn Education Fund's report [All of U.S.](#) provides recommendations for investing in pro-democracy resources particularly in rural regions among poor and working-class communities.

Maria J. Stephan, co-author (with Erica Chenoweth) of *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*, is chief organizer of the Horizons Project, where she works to build a just, inclusive, and peaceful democracy in the U.S. This is excerpted from "[10 Ways Christians Can Protect Democracy](#)," sojo.net.



BEING A
PROGRESSIVE
CHRISTIAN
DOESN'T
ALWAYS
MAKE US
BETTER
NEIGHBORS

BY JOSIAH R. DANIELS

This interview is part of The Reconstruct, a weekly newsletter from Sojourners. David Leong is a grassroots theologian and educator at Seattle Pacific University.

Josiah R. Daniels, Sojourners:
What does it mean to be a good neighbor, especially in an urban context?

David Leong: That's the million-dollar question. The question of what it means to be a good neighbor is not one we spend enough time pondering.

We're really good with the abstract neighbor category, like when we're watching what's happening in Israel and Palestine, and we're like, "Oh my god, the violence, the destruction, especially to children, to innocent life—these are my neighbors." But that's easy to say at arm's length. I'm not trying to diminish the importance of advocating for peaceful resolutions there, at the same time, when we bring the question of neighbor love closer in, [we see that] love is not a fluffy, abstract ideology.

[To borrow] from Latin American critical pedagogy and from the basic life experience of being a neighbor, love is praxis. It's action-oriented. It's tangible. And, therefore, it's proximate. And so love of neighbor requires some sort of proximity. ...



What sort of narratives do you hear from people trying to convince themselves that having “good” or “progressive” opinions translates to being a good neighbor?

...I think that’s the funny thing about “progressive people”—the people who are overeducated but who have no real carrot or stick to put them in relationship or proximity with anyone who’s actually in need. That to me is the ultimate offense. [Seattle] is a place where every other neighbor I meet has a graduate degree in environmental science or a Ph.D. in Indigenous studies, etc. There are a lot of great people here, but I think this sort of baseline default is to consume the right media and say the right things.



This is one hopeful place where the church could be. It’s a place where, at the end of the day, the story that Christians tell is that we are very broken people....

Let’s think about our mutual brokenness. Let’s form a friendship and think about how similar our lives actually are. If people just got a little bit more proximate to the unhoused, they’d be like, “Wow, that’s your life. You actually have a part-time job. You had a medical emergency and lost your insurance. That could have been me.” But I think the fact that everybody wants to end homelessness, but nobody’s willing to have any skin in the game is something the church could talk about.

Josiah R. Daniels is senior associate opinion editor at sojo.net. This is excerpted from [“Progressive Christians Aren’t Always Better Neighbors,”](#) sojo.net.



Verse of the day

Hope deferred makes
the heart sick,
but a desire fulfilled
is a tree of life.

- Proverbs 13:12

Voice of the day

Hope just means another
world might be possible, not
promised, not guaranteed.

Hope calls for action; action
is impossible without hope.

— Rebecca Solnit,

Hope in the Dark (2004)



Prayer of the day

Let us extend our hope
into action, rooted and
outstretched like a tree.

Each weekday morning Sojourners will
send a short verse, a justice quote, and
prayer straight to your inbox. Each
devotional is faith inspired
and social justice themed.
Sign up for Verse and Voice
today at sojo.net/verse.



For more, visit www.sojjo.net
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