

**Wisdom Circles 2012  
January**

*What Does It Mean to be a  
Justice Maker?*

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**"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Martin Luther King Jr.**

**This quote by Martin Luther King is a paraphrase of a quote by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century Unitarian minister and abolitionist Theodore Parker who wrote:**

**"Look at the facts of the world. You see a continual and progressive triumph of the right. I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice. Things refuse to be mismanaged long."**

**What a hopeful perspective! And this from a man who did not live to see his dream of the end of slavery in America comes to pass.**

**We can all be justice makers. All that is required is a heart that aches at human suffering or recoils at mistreatment of fellow human beings, and a willingness to join others in a cause to take action to change things. As anthropologist**

**Margaret Mead reminded us, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”**

**So what gets in the way? Well, it’s easy to get cynical. We can put our heart and soul and time into a cause, without seeing the results we’ve hoped for come to pass in the time we want it to happen. We will have to put up with disappointments. About every issue there is so much information. How are we to act if we can’t be experts? We could have differences of opinion with our fellow activists. And besides, between work and family and hobbies and other responsibilities, who has time? Why risk the heartbreak? Why bother?**

**Columnist Sidney Harris defines a cynic as “not merely one who reads bitter lessons from the past but is pre-maturely disappointed in the future. Unitarian Universalists, said Rev. Forrest Church, are guilty of “the sin of sophisticated resignation.” We are so intelligent, so well informed about issues that we can think of a million reasons why nothing will ever change and that all effort is foolish or useless. But cynicism always favors the status quo. By embracing it, we make a passive choice for things just the way they are.**

**We love to sing, “Spirit of Life”. We sing, “Move in the hand giving life the shape of justice.” Carolyn McDade, the UU who wrote that song once said, “Hope is something we make with our hands.” Indeed the most hopeful people I know are longtime activists, veterans of many struggles who have seen disappointments, but also victories and partial**

victories. They've known the satisfaction of acting with passion on their values, holding before them a vision of the beloved community of all souls.

### Questions To Wrestle With:

These are for you to think about *all month*. We will discuss them together in our groups, but don't wait until your groups to think about them. As always, the gift of Wisdom Circles is that it asks us to think about things that rarely get attention in the rest of our lives. So pull these questions out early. Let them break into --and break open-- your ordinary thoughts.

**1. Of all the injustice in the world, what issue or situation most breaks your heart or engages your sense of moral outrage?**

There is a lot of injustice in the world. We would quickly get overwhelmed if we tried to work on every issue. Rev. Galen Guengerich recommends that you examine yourself and find one issue that you feel passionate about, one issue that engages your heart and your conscience and lend your best efforts to that issue. Trust that there are other concerned people working hard on the other issues that need attention. So take some time to look and ask yourself, "What issue is it that I own?" Do you know others (people or organizations) that work on this issue that you can join? What particular knowledge, skills and talents to you have to offer to the cause?

**2. Justice making is about claiming your power and using it in the name of love. What power do you have that you can use in the service of love?**

**You have power you don't even know you have. If you are a professional, you have skills and training that you can use to help create economic justice, environmental justice, equality for people who are discriminated against and for any number of causes and issues. Educated people have power because we know how to get things done, navigate systems and bureaucracies and gain access to decision makers. Underserved and disadvantaged people often don't have this knowledge and skill that we take for granted. Some of us are retired or in other ways have the gift of time.**

**3. If your life is too busy, what is *one* thing you can do to help create justice in the world?**

**Gandhi said, "What you can do is very little, but it is very important that you do it." Even in your life as it is, what is that very little that you can do?**

**Our Spiritual Exercise:**

**DO ONE JUSTICE MAKING ACTIVITY THIS MONTH**

**You choose what to do. You can take part in the church's service project. Check the Window and Order Of Service announcements for details. The Window will have other opportunities listed as well. You can be part of a Martin Luther King commemoration. You can take food to occupiers in the Occupy San Diego movement at the civic**

**center. You can take part in a demonstration. You can write a passionate e mail to a legislator about an issue you care about. If nothing else, you could write a check to a cause or organization that is slightly larger than what your first impulse would be. Or contribute in a similar way to the Generosity Offering at the Sunday service. There are many opportunities and many possibilities.**

**After the experience, reflect. How do you feel about it? What did you notice about your experience? Did it change you in any way? If the experience was in a group, what did you learn, positive or negative from the other group members.**

## **RECOMENDED RESOURCES:**

*As always, these are not “required reading.” We will not analyze or dissect them in our group. They are meant simply to get your thinking going--and maybe to open you to new ways of thinking. Consider them to be companions on your journey.*

## **WISE WORDS**

Justice is never given; it is exacted and the struggle must be continuous for freedom is never a final fact, but a continuing evolving process to higher and higher levels of human, social, economic, political and religious relationship.

- A. Philip Randolph

One of the most powerful, and deeply spiritual, ways to work for social change is for us to take action in the present that embodies -- right now! -- the future vision that we seek

- Rabbi Arthur Ocean

A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. On the one hand, we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside, but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

## **BOOKS**

### **The Soul Of A Citizen: Living With Conviction In A Cynical Time**

By Paul Loeb

[http://www.amazon.com/Soul-Citizen-Living-Conviction-Cynical/dp/0312204353/ref=tf\\_cw?&linkCode=waf&tag=firsunituni05-20](http://www.amazon.com/Soul-Citizen-Living-Conviction-Cynical/dp/0312204353/ref=tf_cw?&linkCode=waf&tag=firsunituni05-20)

I heard Paul Loeb at General Assembly and bought and read this book immediately. He examines, one by one, the reasons that people don't act for change and brings reassurance, encouragement and inspiration.

## **Online Videos And Audios:**

### **On Being: Civility, History And Hope**

**An interview with civil right movement veteran Vincent Harding**

<http://being.publicradio.org/programs/2011/cep-harding/>

### **On Being: The Private Faith Of Jimmy Carter**

<http://being.publicradio.org/programs/jimmycarter/>