

## THE JOURNEY: A Guide for Reflection

### Justice and Equity

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Most days I observe a ritual of scrolling my favourite news sources, reading what my mind and spirit can absorb in my quest to stay informed about the rapidly evolving world in which we live.

At times, I recognize that in my thirst for knowledge, I can become so well acquainted with the enormity of the injustice and inequity around us that I can be pulled in the direction of what the late Rev. Forrest Church of All Souls UU in New York City called “sophisticated resignation”.

Satisfied that we’ve thoroughly examined the issues, all that remains is to become resigned to what we know of how the real world works, to simply denounce all these as awful problems and move on.

One antidote to this temptation is to do as public interest lawyer and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, Bryan Stevenson, advises: “get proximate”. Get proximate to those who experience inequality to begin to understand the nuanced experiences of suffering which may, in turn, enable us to slowly change the narratives that sustain the problems. In this sense, the answer may be “Who, and not How”.

Love, after all, as theologian Dr. Cornel West said, is what justice looks like in public.

Spirit of Life – give us the courage to lean into discomfort and to be humble in the face of inequity and pain. Fortify our resolve to practice generosity, giving of ourselves and using the power we may have to make a difference, no matter how modest. And when we are weary, may we nurture one another with tenderness.

In faith and love,

Angela

## Questions to Live With



Image for 2022 National Indigenous History Month (June) courtesy of Government of Canada

1. What was your first moment of fighting injustice?
2. How do you differentiate between justice and equity? And why does that distinction matter?
3. How have you changed your mind about what it takes to achieve justice? What tactics seemed central earlier in your life, but no longer appear so now?
4. What personal or societal injustice has most shaped your life?
5. When the enormity of injustice looms, what enables you to hold onto hope?
6. What have you learned about balancing the competing desires to save and savor the world?
7. If these questions don't address how you need to explore justice and equity this month, what is your question?

## For Inspiration

That which is not good for the swarm, neither is it good for the bee.

- Book VI, 54. Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

If one really wishes to know how justice is administered in a country, one does not question the policemen, the lawyers, the judges, or the protected members of the middle class. One goes to the unprotected – those, precisely, who need the law's protection most! – and listens to their testimony.

- James Baldwin

Your uprising against the forces of darkness has got to do more than say "no." A fierce, primal "yes" should be at the heart of your crusade.

- rob brezny

I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.

- Angela Davis

History is a narrative; it's a collection of stories sanctioned by the ruling power, and reinforced through words and images that suit them. That was the whole point of taking on history painting: to authorize these moments that have been swept under the rug for generations.

- Kent Monkman

In a racist society it is not enough to be non-racist, we must be anti-racist.

- Angela Davis

I learned that racism, like most systems of oppression, isn't about bad people doing terrible things to people who are different from them but instead is a way of maintaining power for certain groups at the expense of others.

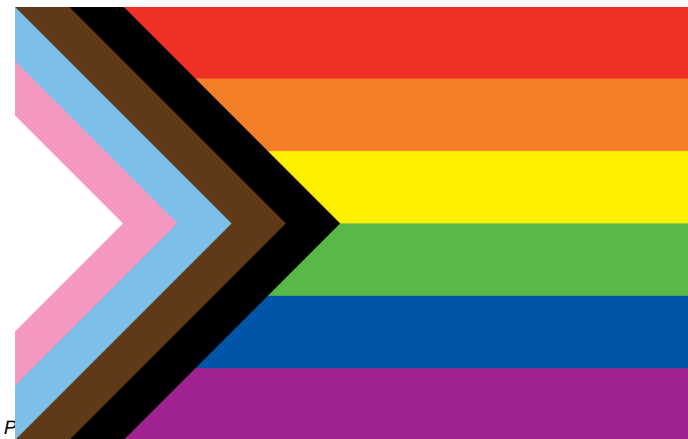
- Alicia Garza

The fight is not just being able to keep breathing. The fight is actually to be able to walk down the street with your head held high — and feel like I belong here, or I deserve to be here, or I just have [a] right to have a level of dignity.

- Alicia Garza

I am only one but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.

- Edward Everett Hale



Continue to speak out against all forms of injustice to yourselves and others, and you will set a mighty example for your children and for future generations.

- Bernice King

It takes no compromise to give people their rights... it takes no money to respect the individual. It takes no political deal to give people freedom. It takes no survey to remove repression.

- Harvey Milk

If you are not at the table then you're probably on the menu.

- Modern adage

There will be no equity without solidarity. There will be no justice without a social movement.

- Joia Mukherjee

"This is the intense love of land, of family, and of our nations that has always been the spine of Indigenous resistance. The fact that I am here today is a miracle, because it means my family, like every Indigenous family, did whatever they could to ensure that I survived the past four hundred years of violence. For my kobade to survive and flourish the next four hundred years, we need to join together in a rebellion of love, persistence, commitment and profound caring and create constellations of coresistance working together toward a radical alternative present based on deep reciprocity and the gorgeous generative refusal of colonial recognition."

- Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

When we identify where our privilege intersects with somebody else's oppression, we'll find our opportunities to make real change.

- Ijeoma Oluo

...the core values that underpin sustainable development - interdependence, empathy, equity, personal responsibility and intergenerational justice - are the only foundation upon which any viable vision of a better world can possibly be constructed.

- Jonathon Porritt

Equity is first and foremost about justice, and justice starts with the individual and the individuals holding themselves and their institutions accountable.

- Darrick Smith



If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

- Desmond Tutu

If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you recognize that your liberation and mine are bound up together, we can walk together.

- Lilla Watson



*Pan-African flag: Red: the blood that unites all people of Black African ancestry, and shed for liberation; Black: for the people whose existence as a nation, though not a nation-state, is affirmed by the existence of the flag; Green: the abundant and vibrant natural wealth of Africa, the Motherland.*

Once poverty is gone, we'll need to build museums to display its horrors to future generations. They'll wonder why poverty continued so long in human society--how a few people could live in luxury while billions dwelt in misery, deprivation and despair.

- Muhammad Yunus

My Pronoun is People  
(Inclusivity Sonnet, 1266)

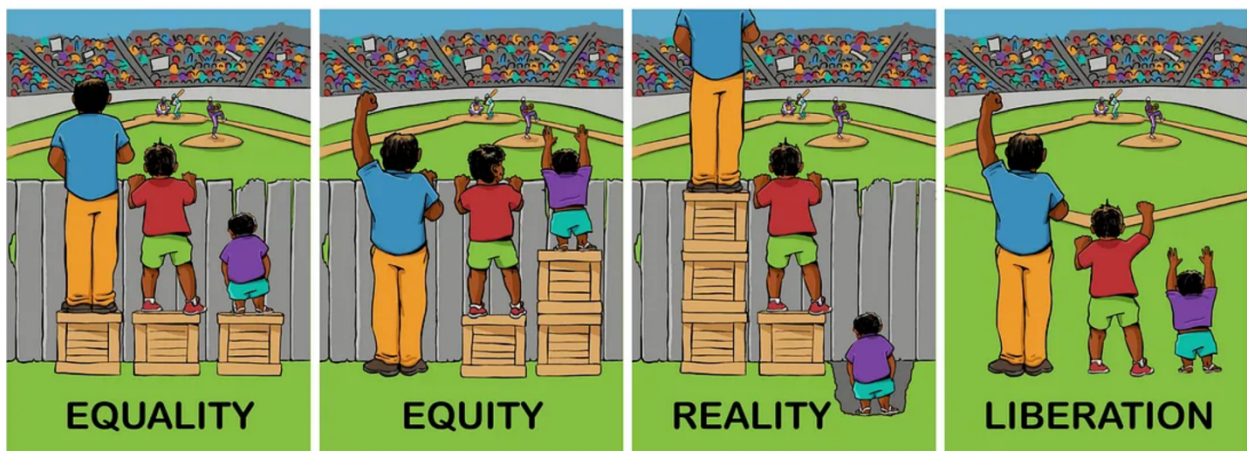
My pronoun is people,  
I'm divergent, yet invincible.  
I am straight, I am queer;  
I am civilian, I am seer.  
Spirit of life, I am universal!

Call me disabled or differently able  
Call me collective or individual.  
Fleshly forms I've got plenty,  
All run by same love and liberty -  
Culture supreme is inclusion.

Each heart is a shelter for another,  
Each life is sanctuary for another.  
Blasting all traditions of divide  
into cinders with knowledge-dynamite,  
we shall emerge as each other's keeper.

You ask, what am I - I say, I am human,  
Better yet, I'm human's idea of a human.  
I am but the human absolute -  
morally unbending 'n divinely cute -  
ever evolving testament to expansion.

- Abhijit Naskar



## Optional Spiritual Exercise

### A Recipe for Hope

It's a question we all wrestle with: How do you hold on to hope in a world so overrun with injustice and inequity? Paul Goodman, a writer and leftist activist in the 1960's, had a recipe for holding onto hope that others continue to quote even today. This is Goodman's three step suggestion:

*"Suppose you had the revolution you are talking and dreaming about. Suppose your side had won, and you had the kind of society that you wanted. How would you live, you personally, in that society? Start living that way now!"*

With this recipe for hope in mind, take some time this month to do the following three things:

1. Write down 8 things that would characterize the revolution and kind of society you dream about.
2. Write down 8 ways you would live differently than you do today in that dreamed of society.
3. Of those 8 ways you'd live differently, pick one and figure out a way to "start living that way now!"

Beware. Step 3 will likely turn out to be more complicated than you think, or hope. And that's ok. Wrestling with that complication is a big part of what this exercise is all about. Don't give up if you can't live it out perfectly. An approximation is likely the most any of us can do given the society we live in today.

Come to your group ready to share not only what you gained from the exercise but also how it impacted your level of hope.

## Join Us

### Join a Journey Group

Journey Groups are a great way to go deeper with our monthly theme by sharing with small group of people for a couple of hours each month. Groups meet online on Zoom and are scheduled at different times during the month.

For more information, visit our website [firstunitariantoronto.org/journey-groups/](https://firstunitariantoronto.org/journey-groups/) or look for the link in *First Light*.

### Upcoming Themes

March – Transformation | April – Interdependence | May – Pluralism

## The Journey Team

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