



Social Justice Quotations That Keep Me Going

Passionate and qualified are both really important and mean nothing without the other.

Anonymous

If you see someone without a smile give them yours because you can make more.

Dolly Parton/ my mother (my mother wasn't Dolly, and this was her favorite quote).

History matters. It matters whether we tell the truth about what happened centuries ago, and it matters whether we tell the truth about more recent history. It matters because if we can't we will never be able to face the present, guaranteeing that our future will be doomed.

Robert Jensen, The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism, and White Privilege

Usually we regard loneliness as an enemy. Heartache is not something we choose to invite in. It's restless and pregnant and hot with the desire to escape and find something or someone to keep us company. When we can rest in the middle, we begin to have a nonthreatening relationship with loneliness, a relaxing and cooling loneliness that completely turns our usual fearful patterns upside down.

Pema Chödrön, When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times

It's important to remember, when we're out there aggressively working for reform, that, even if our particular issue doesn't get resolved, we are adding peace to the world. We have to do our best and at the same time give up all hope of fruition.

Pema Chödrön, When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times

Find a balance between one's responsibility as a white person to confront acts of racism and one's subconscious sense of power and privilege over people of color when reacting to the [racist] event.

Eileen O'Brien, Whites Confront Racism: Antiracist and Their Paths to Action

Exposing their own humility and vulnerability is one of the most difficult challenges for white antiracist, even after achieving an autonomous white racial identity.

Eileen O'Brien, Whites Confront Racism: Antiracist and Their Paths to Action

Whites have traded their culture for power.

Eileen O'Brien, Whites Confront Racism: Antiracist and Their Paths to Action

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No reform is possible unless some of the educated and the rich voluntarily accept the status of the poor, travel third, refuse to enjoy the amenities denied to the poor and, instead of taking avoidable hardships, discourtesies and injustice as a matter of course, fight for their removal.

Mobandas K. Gandhi: An Autobiography: The Story of my Experiments with Truth

Civility does not ...mean the mere outward gentleness of speech cultivated for the occasion, but an inborn gentleness and desire to do the opponent good.

Mobandas K. Gandhi: An Autobiography: The Story of my Experiments with Truth

The only true resistance to this Government... [is] to cease to co-operate with it.

Mobandas K. Gandhi: An Autobiography: The Story of my Experiments with Truth

To say that it is not our fault does not relieve us of responsibility. However, we may not have polluted the air, but we need to take responsibility, along with others, for cleaning it up. Each of us needs to look at our own behavior. Am I perpetuating and reinforcing the negative messages so pervasive in our culture, or am I seeking to challenge them?

Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D., "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" And Other Conversations About Race

The social pressure from friend and acquaintance to collude, to not notice racism, can be quite powerful.

Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D., "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" And Other Conversations About Race

Many white people experience themselves as powerless, even in the face of privilege. But the fact is that we all have a sphere of influence, some domain in which we exercise some level of power and control. The task for each of us, White and of color, is to identify what our own sphere of influence is (however large or small) and to consider how it might be used to interrupt the cycle of racism.

Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D., "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" And Other Conversations About Race

One of the consequences of racism in our society is that those who oppose racism are often marginalized, and as a result, their stories are not readily accessed. Yet having access to these stories makes a difference to those Whites who are looking for ways to be agents of change.

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White people who are doing this work need to make their stories known to serve as guides for others.

Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D., "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" And Other Conversations About Race

In order to prevent chronic discomfort, Whites may learn not to notice.

Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D., "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" And Other Conversations About Race

To the real question, "How does it feel to be a problem?" I answer seldom a word.

W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk

The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line.

W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk

The function of the university is not simply to teach bread-winning, or to furnish teachers for the public schools, or to be a centre of polite society; it is above all, to be the organ of that fine adjustment between real life and the growing knowledge of life, an adjustment which forms the secret of civilization.

W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk

Progress in human affairs is more often a pull than a push, a surging forward of the exceptional man, and the lifting of his duller brethren slowly and painfully to his vantage-ground.

W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk

You can't organize people if you don't love them. And however hard it can be to love the racist you come in contact with; doing so is the first obligation of a white antiracist.

Tim Wise, White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son

People of color have to do this work as a matter of everyday survival. And so long as they have to, who am I to act as if I have a choice in the matter? Especially when my future and that of my children in large part depends on the eradication of racism? There is no choice.

Tim Wise, White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son

I happen to think apologies are pretty empty absent substantive reparations and recompense – I think that perhaps before we focus so much on apologies, we could simply say "thank

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you” to people of color. Thank you to blacks for, among other things, building the country’s economy. Thank you to Latinos for, among other things, showing us how to mine gold so that we could become a wealthier nation. Thank you to native peoples for, among other things, showing us how to farm and harvest crops so we wouldn’t starve. Thank you to Asians for, among other things, building the railroads without which the transcontinental economy would never have developed as it did. And, thank you to all people of color for pointing the way when it comes to resistance. Thank you for refusing to die. People of color owe us nothing, but we owe them at least that much.

Tim Wise, White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son

The GREAT appear great because we are on our knees. Let us rise.

James Larkin, Irish Union Organizer

Be the change you seek in the world.

Mohandas Karamchand [Mahatma] Gandhi

The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical disease with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love.

Mother Teresa [Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu]

The Negro’s great stumbling block is not the White Citizen’s Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to “order” than to justice,... who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Letter from Birmingham Jail

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