Soul Matters

The Path of Resistance



Small Group
April 2023

Welcome to the Path of Resistance

...it starts when you say We
and know who you mean, and each
day you mean one more.
- Marge Piercy, from "The Low Road"

Out of all our themes this year, resistance is among the most complex. But it also may be the most simple.

Let's start with the complexity.

Sometimes resistance involves bravely picking up a picket sign; other times it asks us to courageously put down our masks and expose who we really are. Sometimes it involves defeating the enemy; other times it's a matter of noticing that treating them as the enemy defeats us all.

Often the path of resistance asks us to stay in it for the long haul, but just as often it's about taking that first tiny step. Most of the time it requires us to fight to the bitter end, and yet there are many moments when we need to stop resisting and let go.

Resistance certainly takes the form of speaking the truth to power, but often what the world needs even more is for us to speak the truth in love.

Bottom line: the path of resistance is tricky business and takes multiple, even contradictory, forms.

But beyond this complexity lies the simplicity of Marge Piercy's words. In ***all*** cases, she reminds us, the path of resistance starts when we say "We!" For instance, the power of our picket sign resides in the fact that it hangs alongside those of others. Being who we are usually begins with another loving us for who we are. Both the long haul and our first courageous step are made possible by reaching out to receive a helping hand.

It's all one big reminder that none of us resist alone.

Or maybe what really needs to be said this month is that none of us ***have to*** resist alone. Each and every path of resistance is daunting. But they are made even more daunting when we tell ourselves that we must travel those paths by ourselves.

So, yes, we certainly need to be pushed and prodded this month. But maybe what we need most is to be reassured. Reassured that when the road gets too treacherous, when the forces against us grow too big, others will be by our side. Maybe it's not more courage that is required, but more connection. Maybe what we really need to hear is not simply "Resist!" but "I will resist with you!" and "Let's start with 'WE'!"

Maybe it is as simple as that.

Our Spiritual Exercises

Option A: Give Thanks!

Who made resistance possible for you? We all have someone. Someone who stood beside you as you stood against the status quo. Someone who taught a class or gave a sermon that invited you into a vision of an entirely new way of being in the world. Someone whose countercultural lifestyle gave you the courage to do a bit of the same. Someone who made you feel like a one-of-a-kind rather than a misfit. Someone who helped you resist the pressures to follow the herd. Someone whose sacrifice moved your heart.

So, for your exercise this month, figure out who your "someone" is and THANK THEM!

Whether it is with a letter, email, gift, or face-to-face words over coffee, find a way to tell them how they made your resistance possible. Let them know how big of a gift their influence or example has been.

Option B: Rethink Resistance

When one thinks of resistance, the first thing to come to mind is not usually self-love, rest, or joy. But a number of thought leaders - especially leaders of color - are trying to change that. By widening our perspective, they are not only helping us get in touch with deep personal needs, but also prophetically diagnosing how society needs to change.

So spend this month getting to know three of the most incisive and inspiring of these thinkers. They are listed below, along with suggested avenues into their ideas.

To make this into a personal spiritual exercise, don't just explore their thinking in the abstract. Instead, make it personal by identifying 2-3 quotes or short passages from their work that speak to you about something you are facing in your own life. In other words, the goal is *not* to find the 2-3 pieces that *interest* you most; it is to find the 2-3 that most powerfully offer you a *personal word of* ***comfort or challenge***.

Come to your group ready to share *one* of those quotes/short passages and how you think it is trying to offer you comfort or challenge.

Sonya Renee Taylor on Self-Love as an Act of Resistance

- Interview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ovLYCQp9l0
- Excerpt: https://www.wellandgood.com/sonya-renee-taylor-radical-self-love/
- Podcast Interview: https://brenebrown.com/podcast/brene-with-sonya-renee-taylor-on-the-body-is-not-an-apology/

Tricia Hersey on Rest as an Act of Resistance

- Blog post: https://thenapministry.wordpress.com/2022/02/21/rest-is-anything-that-connects-your-mind-and-body/
- Book excerpt: https://www.thecut.com/2022/10/rest-is-resistance-manifesto-nap-ministry-book-excerpt.html
- Podcast: https://open.spotify.com/episode/0eoNdCY1XHvc1bVQquB2Gk?si=4YSBXtCQTVSxUV-O5EOI_Q&nd=1

adrienne maree brown on Joy & Pleasure as Acts of Resistance

- Article: https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/pleasure/2022/05/18/power-in-pleasure-adrienne-maree-brown
- Excerpt: https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2019/05/14/adrienne-maree-brown-social-change-body-pleasure-activism
- Podcast: https://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2020/04/06/finding-joy-during-coronavirus

Option C: Try a Little Lent-Inspired Resistance

March is a big liturgical season for our Christian cousins. It's Lent! The forty-day period leading up to Easter during which you give up something tempting in your life to personally connect with Jesus' forty days in the desert resisting the devil's temptations. As some say, it is a practice that helps one "forego a lesser good in order to focus energies on the pursuit of a higher good."

There's inspiration here for all of us. So why not use this month to resist a temptation of your own? And remember, the goal is not just to resist the bad stuff, but to make room for the good stuff.

Option D: Take a Baby Step into Deeper Counter-Cultural Resistance

How are you doing at resisting the worst pressures of our culture? Truth is, all our counter-cultural resistance efforts could use a tune up. It's just so easy for our lives to drift toward the herd.

So how might you use this month to step up your counter-cultural game? Or how might you use this month to try on some new counter-cultural tactics to see how well they fit? The possibilities are endless: Go from pescetarian to vegetarian, or vegetarian to vegan, buy no new clothes, institute a weekly "digital sabbath," give up TV or alcohol, slap a bumper sticker on your car that shouts your values, give up eating out and double your church pledge, car-pool, etc. One of the most beloved lists of counter-cultural acts is Wendell Berry's "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front." Give that a read. It's sure to give you an idea or two.

The goal of this exercise is not just to resist our culture but to reflect on how well we are living our values. We all want to make sure our lives communicate our values just as clearly as our words do.

Option E: Photograph Resistance for a Week

The instructions for this exercise are simple: For each day of one week, take 3-5 pictures of "resistance."

But here's where it gets harder: Don't overthink it. Don't predetermine what counts as "resistance." Just keep your eye out for whatever seems to be announcing itself to you as a form of resistance. So one minute you might find yourself taking a picture of the TV screen as the news reports on a protest against police brutality. But an hour later, it might be a flower pushing itself through a crack in the sidewalk. And then a day later you may find yourself taking a picture of your dog refusing to take a bath or of your wife's tattoo which she got to resist the stereotypes of what grandmas should and shouldn't do.

And for the final step: At the end of the week, go through all the pictures you took and look for common themes. Let those common threads tell you how your definition of resistance seems to be growing in ways you didn't fully realize!

Come to your group ready to share 2-3 of your favorite pictures and 1-2 of the insights the exercise gave to you.

Option F: Ask Them About Resistance

One of the best ways to explore our monthly themes is to bring them into the conversations you have with those closest to you. It's a powerful way to deepen our conversations and our relationships.

Below is a list of "resistance questions" to help you on your way.

Come to your group ready to share 1-2 things that surprised you about the conversation(s) and what gift or insight it gave you. And as always, keep a lookout for how your inner voice is trying to send you a word of comfort or challenge through these conversions with others.

Resistance Questions:

- As a kid, did you resist the rules, or did you follow them?
- How did your parents' acts of social justice resistance shape you?
- Who is your current favorite social justice resistor and why?
- Has your resistance to change grown or eased as you've gotten older?
- What change in your life do you wish you had ***not*** resisted?
- Do you have a life story that exemplifies the saying, "What you resist, persists"?
- Is it possible that the form of resistance life is calling you to right now is rest?
- How good are you at resisting the tyranny of the to do list?

Option G: Which Resistance Quote Calls to You?

Sometimes we read a quote and it perfectly captures what's going on for us right now. Or allows us to view our current circumstances in a new light. With this in mind, spend some time this month reading through the quotes in the Companion Pieces section below to ***find the one that best illuminates your journey with the path of resistance.***

We encourage you to use the same discernment practice with these quotes as you do with the packet's list of questions:

- **Read through the list of quotes** a few times, noting which ones "shimmer" (i.e. call to you or have an emotional gravitational pull for you). It often helps to circle or star these quotes that stand out.
- With each reading, **narrow your focus** in on those that stick out, until you finally **settle on the one quote** that pulls at you the most.
- Then make space to **reflect** on what gift, challenge or insight your chosen quote is offering you.
- Some of us may want to **go further** and capture your reflections with journaling or creative expression.

Come to your group ready to share your quote and the journey it took you on.

Your Question

Don't treat these questions like "homework" or try to answer every one. Instead, make time to meditate on the list and then pick the one question that speaks to you most. The goal is to figure out which question is "yours." Which question captures the call of your inner voice? Which one contains "your work"? And what is that question trying to get you to notice or acknowledge?

Often it helps to read the list to a friend or loved one and ask them which question they think is the question you need to wrestle with!

***A note about self-care:** Often these questions take us to a vulnerable space. It is OKAY to ignore the questions that may be triggering – or lean in if that feels safe.*

1. How did your parents' acts of resistance shape you?
2. Has your resistance to change grown or eased as you've gotten older?
3. What change in your life do you wish you had ***not*** resisted?
4. Have you been following the path of least resistance for so long that you no longer notice?
5. Is it time to heed the warning that "What you resist, persists"?
6. What problematic emotion is hardest for you to resist? Jealousy? Pessimism? Spite? Judgmentalism? Wanting to be right? Wanting to always win? (What is one thing you might do to get better at that?)
7. How has art shaped and inspired your political resistance?
8. Is life trying to lead you down a road you've long resisted?
9. Is it possible that the form of resistance you need to take right now is rest?
10. How good are you at resisting the tyranny of the to do list?
11. Is your resistance animated by breath or by anger and despair alone?
12. Are you resisting looking at a truth in your life right now?

What's your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life or your inner voice is asking you, spend the month listening to your days to find it.

Companion Pieces

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

The following resources are not required reading. We will not analyze these pieces in our group. Instead they are here to companion you on your journey this month, get you thinking and open you up to new ways of imagining the path of resistance.

Wise Words

Change is never painful. Only resistance to change is painful.
Author unknown

What you resist, persists.
Carl Jung

Be soft.
Do not let the world
make you hard.
Do not let pain
make you hate.
Do not let bitterness
Steal your sweetness.
Kurt Vonnegut

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

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Once a reporter asked A.J. Muste, "Do you really think you are going to change the policies of this country by standing out here alone at night in front of the White House with a candle?" Muste replied softly: "Oh I don't do this to change the country. I do this so the country won't change me."
Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

After all, if you do not resist the apparently inevitable, you will never know how inevitable the inevitable was.
Terry Eagleton

So, friends, every day do something
that won't compute… Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
Love someone who does not deserve it.
Denounce the government and embrace
the flag….
Ask the questions that have no answers…
Laugh.
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful
though you have considered all the facts…
Wendell Berry

Resist the finished wash cycle and the dishes clamoring for clean-up. Ignore the pileup by the front door… [Instead make room for] the first quiet of the morning. It is thin and needy, hungry for your touch. You will miss it when it goes, siphoning out the way it does, toppled by the weight of all your noisy urgencies.
Maya Stein

Don't just resist cynicism — fight it actively... Like all forms of destruction, cynicism is infinitely easier and lazier than construction. There is nothing more difficult yet more gratifying in our society than living with… faith in the human spirit… This [faith] remains the most potent antidote to cynicism. Today, especially, it is an act of courage and resistance.
Maria Popova

The only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion.
Albert Camus

Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.
Audre Lorde

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?...
Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?...
Maya Angelou

Black joy matters. Black love matters. Black rest matters. They all matter. Why? Simply put: Our existence is resistance.
L'Oreal Thompson Payton

When we acknowledge that we exist in an anti-black world that is set up to ensure we do not live, to choose life and to choose to enjoy any aspect of that life is a radical act.
Kleaver Cruz

Rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy. Both of these toxic systems refuse to see the inherent divinity of human beings and have used human bodies as a tool for production, evil and violence for centuries. Grind culture has made us into human machines, willing and ready to donate our lives to a capitalist system that thrives by placing profit over people.
Tricia Hersey

The role of the artist is to make revolution irresistible.
Toni Cade Bambara

This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before.
Leonard Bernstein

So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice?
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Music

There are two different playlists for each of our monthly themes: one in Spotify and another in YouTube. They are organized as a journey of sorts, so consider listening from beginning to end and using the playlists as musical meditations.

Click here for the Spotify playlist on Resistance.
Click here for all Spotify playlists.
Click here for the YouTube playlist on Resistance. Click here for all the YouTube playlists.

Videos & Podcasts

This Is Not a Humanising Poem
Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan
youtube.com/watch?v=G9Sz2BQdMF8&t=127s

Meet the Resistance Revival Chorus
youtube.com/watch?v=asT51-ZM_yY
The chorus in action:
youtube.com/watch?v=Bu1K4kU6hdk&t=48s

A Letter to Remind Myself Who I Am
Shane Koyczan
youtube.com/watch?v=IXpG1DNSsBM&t=98s
On resisting the lure to quit

The Secret
youtube.com/watch?v=BwsuiWM2GQo
On resisting by surrendering

Open-Hearted Beauty
Ahlaam Lala Abduljalil
youtube.com/watch?v=UgwzHkkPZbw
On the resistance required to choose your beauty

Bodies of Resistance
Sonya Renee Taylor
youtube.com/watch?v=wR5ISTTlmtA

Got Climate Doom? Here's What You Can Do to Actually Make a Difference
podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-argument/id1438024613?i=1000541325100
Focusing our climate catastrophe resistance on individual behavior is a good start, but it won't bring the change that is needed; only large-scale political action and resistance will save us!

How Occupy Wall Street Reshaped Politics, Kicked Off New Era of Protest
youtube.com/watch?v=A9X6HDU4NiI

The Success of Nonviolent Civil Resistance, TED Talk
youtube.com/watch?v=YJSehRlU34w
"Then I analyzed the data, and the results blew me away. From 1900 to 2006, nonviolent campaigns worldwide were twice as likely to succeed outright as violent insurgencies."
Related podcast here

The Forger
youtube.com/watch?v=Dup6KOoaAUc&t=319s
As a teenager, Adolfo Kaminsky supported the resistance to the Nazis and saved thousands of lives by forging passports to help children flee.
Related article:
thisiscolossal.com/2023/01/the-forger-adolfo-kaminsky/

Articles

Building a Welcoming Movement
Starhawk
starhawk.org/building-a-welcoming-movement/

What You Resist, Persists—What You Accept, Transforms
thehappinessdoctor.com/blog/what-you-resist-persists-what-you-accept-transforms

Books

***Pleasure Activism*: The Politics of Feeling Good**
adrienne maree brown

***Octavia's Brood*: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements**

***How to Do Nothing*: Resisting the Attention Economy**
Jenny Odell

***Rest Is Resistance*: A Manifesto**
Tricia Hersey

Movies & TV

Call Jane

Crip Camp

AWAKE, A Dream from Standing Rock

Severance

1619 Project

The Woman King

No Bears

More Monthly Inspiration from Soul Matters!

Our Facebook Inspiration Page:

https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/

Our Instagram Page:

Find us as "soul_matters_circle"

Music Playlists:

Click here for links to the Spotify playlists for each month.
Click here to check out the YouTube playlists.

Packet Introduction Credit Note: Unless explicitly noted otherwise, the introductions of these packets are written by our Team Lead, Rev. Scott Tayler. Rev. Scott gives permission for his pieces to be used in any way that is helpful, including in newsletters, worship and in online service/recordings.

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