

We Will Win



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Intersectionality speaks to a world-view and perspective – a way to analyze overlapping forms of identity and varied experiences and also systems of oppression, a lens with which to view struggle and freedom that is inclusive and sees liberation as interconnected. It is how one person can see and experience the world through overlapping perspectives of race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, documentation status, and so many more – two of these influences can affect one’s world view; all can affect one’s world view. It is often a deeply internal awakening to reach a perspective of intersectionality; it is also where we will find our solutions.

There is a war in America. It is a war of ideals, of information, of technology and media - and it is a war for the unrealized humanity of the nation. If we are to be honest, to end the charade of arguments framed in political deflection and evasive discourse, then both sides that are engaged in this battle would acknowledge this war. What will America be?

America has always been an aspirational concept. It is a nation founded on a declaration of independence and themes of democracy and freedom and opportunity – and yet, as we know well, the great sin, the foundational lie of the nation, is that the democracy and freedom and opportunity it has pontificated about, has not been for “we the people.” The truth is, American liberty and democracy has always been reserved for the precious few – originally land owning white men. Black people, indigenous people, women, and poor whites were not included in these original ideals.

And so, America has been in a state of war since its founding.

At times this war has been one of internecine battles – fought in corridors of power and influence, in court decisions issued quietly directing the nation’s

course. At other times this war has broken into the open – the stark choice the nation faced clear to all: between indigenous people and those who sought to slaughter their numbers in a genocide; between Abolitionists and those who sought to enslave and own human beings; between America and the Southern forces who seceded, created their own treasonous nation, their chief stated goal to continue human bondage; between freedom fighters and white supremacist forces who fought to defeat the gains secured during Reconstruction; between the Women’s Suffrage movement as they fought to ensure full freedom and citizenship for women and others who fought to keep women as second class citizens. The American ideal has been betrayed many times in our history: when the United States Supreme Court forced Japanese Americans into internment camps and much of the nation responded with support or deafening silence; when fascist forces under the name of McCarthyism suppressed speech and political freedom, threatening imprisonment or deportation for ideals; when labor sought to create rights for workers and big businesses fought to continue child labor and grinding inhumane work conditions in the name of profit; when citizens took to the streets to stand for full citizenship for Black people, 100 years after the end of the Civil War, and in response, the power and violence of the state sought to continue Segregation; when college students sought to end a war in Vietnam and were responded to with massive arrests and police violence; when bigotry, social and legal oppression faced Gay and Lesbian people and their allies who believed in full and complete protection for all sexual orientations and identities; when widespread political forces sought to silence and defeat women who had once again created a movement seeking full freedom and opportunity as well as a radical revision of our idea of what makes a man or a woman; and when jingoistic forces of exclusion advocate inhumane policies in response to the undocumented and the dreamers. This has always been a nation of war engaged in battles of ideas. There have always been two sides.

And so, we are in a time, again, when this war has broken into the open. Trump did not create this war or these conditions, but his election opened many eyes to the battles being fought in shadows. It is a battle to determine whether America will live up to its ideals as a nation – will move beyond that aspirational concept to a lived reality, to what America can be. There are some who would call the use of “war” a hyperbolic word. They would be wrong. Today, on one

side you have those who fight and struggle for a more humane and human America – one that protects the undocumented, seeks a path into the light and citizenship for those long here; one that believes in the absolute equality of women and women’s right to control their own bodies and reproductive choices; one that believes that the present disparity of wealth and opportunity are untenable, exploitative and destructive; one that believes that the prison system is profoundly unjust, soiled to its core, and needs a foundational transformation, not mere reform; one that believes the environment is in danger, that global warming and climate change must be confronted as a national and international emergency; one that believes that in America, the wealthiest nation in the world, healthcare should be a right for all of its citizens; one that believes that structural racism and state violence must be confronted; one that believes in pluralism, diverse immigration and religious freedom; and one that knows that education creates opportunity, and therefore should not be afforded at a high level to the few but instead guaranteed as a right for all, that all children must have first rate educational access.

And then there are those who stand on the other side.

I co-founded The Brotherhood/Sister Sol, a social justice organization, in 1995. We are committed to working to respond to inequality, to train young people to become empowered as social change agents, to work to expand a vision of equity, racial, gender and economic justice - opportunity and access for all. We are deeply rooted in teaching young people to form and hone a moral and ethical code and to undergo a political transformation that leads to understanding the inequity they face directly, as well as those around the world, so that through this education they can become social change makers. They confront issues of racism, sexism, homophobia, hyper masculinity/patriarchy and poverty – intersected social justice movements in this country that have created lasting political change: the Civil Rights Movement, the Women’s Movement, the Anti-War Movements, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Equal Rights Movements, to name a few – all focused on the political education of young people, through consciousness raising and study, with increased understanding of and involvement in the democratic process - whether voting or working to change laws and legislation or marching and demonstrating in the streets of our country.

We will win, in the end, because humanity and justice are on our side – because young people are driving a change in ideals. Great damage will be done to many people during this war we find ourselves in – but we will win. These are not words of didactic puffery and frivolous hopefulness, it is not my nature, but instead I write them from a place of cold, calculated optimism. We, those who fight for a more humane world, must wrap ourselves in this optimism. We will win because 66 million people voted for Hillary Clinton and 63 million voted for Donald Trump and 100 million eligible voters, nearly 43%, did not vote – and we will win the minds of most of these 100 million through our vision and optimism and humanity grounded in unyielding, tough, focused solutions. We will win because demographics are with us - as the nation becomes increasingly people of color, younger, diverse, more inclusive. We will win because we will organize, agitate, push back on lies and misinformation, take to the streets, vote, litigate, create tough art and speak out. We will support one another, break down silos, define our national narrative and embrace common struggles of people everywhere – for their struggles are our own. We will win because the fate of this nation is in our hands.

Love does not defeat hate in a war of feelings. It does not always overcome. This adage is untrue. Hate has won many of such battles over time - and genocides that have been committed, and wars that have been fought in hate's name, fill the world's graveyards to overflowing. Generations have been lost to hate. But love, a righteous love for humanity, a love for inclusiveness of all people, will win. When this kind of love is combined with fierce, unyielding action, then hate does not stand a chance.

And so, yes, we will win.