

A Reluctant Marcher

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We've all been doing a lot of marching lately. There have been so many major witnesses in DC this year that the running joke is that "protest is the new brunch."

I have a confession to make. I get awfully grumpy about all these marches.

Which is not to say I don't go. In the ten years since I moved to DC I've been to more rallies, protests and prayer vigils than I can count. I am deeply concerned about injustice, so despite my bad attitude, I show up. But every time another big one comes around, I find myself getting grouchy all over again.

"Why don't people march in their own cities?" I ask as I push through the crowds on the metro platform.

"Wouldn't a visit to your legislator be more impactful?" I huff as I clean up discarded protest signs on my walk home.

"What difference does all this marching even make?" I grumble as I lace up my shoes once again.

And every time, despite my lack of faith, I am rewarded.

Here's the thing I always forget – advocacy is not an activity best done in isolation.

Worrying about the world, reading endless articles on the Internet, and sending frustrated Tweets out into the ether will wear you down after a time. Being with other advocates; sharing stories of hope and struggle; seeing the diversity, creativity and beauty of our country first hand - these are the things that feed the spirit and fortify a heavy heart.

It is an unexpected joy to witness to your beliefs with nothing more (or less) than your physical presence. In a world where time is money, it sends a quietly powerful message.

We can only change the world if we do it together. This is not simply a statement of scale. The injustices of racism, sexism, homophobia, environmental degradation and more cannot be endured alone.

We need to surround ourselves with other warriors for justice. We need to be stretched and challenged by the stories of communities on the front lines. We need to roar in the face of oppression and challenge the political status quo. We need it, even when we do not know that we do.

Take it from me - you don't need to set aside your skepticism. You just need to show up. Bring your bad attitude if you have to, along with your walking shoes, water and snacks to share. I'll see you out there.

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