

What A Little Moonlight Can Do

by **Quan Williams**
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When I was nine years old, I wished for a telescope for my birthday. My Uncle Hirschey got it for me. To date, it is one of my favorite gifts of all time. I've been fascinated with astronomy ever since I saw the Challenger Space Shuttle blow up on the news in 1986. I wondered what in the sky was worth strapping onto a rocket to go see. This week marks 47 years since astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr. became the first men to walk on the moon. The anniversary has me reflecting on what a little moonlight can do.

Moonlight can be the only reprieve for a person suffering from rape or violence. We all know that rape and violence happen at all hours of the day and night. However, there is a particular vulnerability that comes with the shadows and darkness of night—especially when we consider the domestic abuse that often happens in one's own home. Almost every night for three years, I was sexually assaulted by my stepfather. After these assaults on my adolescence and personhood, I would often stare at the glow-in-the-dark stars on my wall or the real ones glowing outside of my bedroom window. Looking for God through those stars was one of the ways I tried to think beyond what was happening to me. I knew that survival and justice was possible if I could just keep my head up. The moon was my sunlight.

There is so much work to do to bring awareness, resources, and support for young people and adults working through trauma. Issues like gender-based violence and sexual abuse are sordid issues that churches, families, and people in general often sweep under the rug. It's time for less sweeping and more shedding light. I support "Thursdays in Black"—an ecumenical campaign towards a world without rape and violence. It's one small step we can all take for the cause. You can engage by simply wearing black every Thursday and posting your picture on social media with the hashtag #ThursdaysInBlack and a message of solidarity with the campaign.

On a policy level, there's legislation that was introduced by Rep. Schakowsky from Illinois and Sen. Boxer from California that would establish a U.S. agency that addresses gender-based violence globally. Recently, the United States

Senate passed Resolution 293—a bill supporting the goals and ideals of National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The need for pieces of legislation like these couldn't be more relevant or timely.

A person I love dearly who is a victim of sexual abuse tried to commit suicide last week. She said that she was tired of feeling helpless and alone. She said that she didn't want to live like that anymore. She said that she couldn't see the moon from where she is. I have to show her the light. So do you.

Dr. King said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." Let's say something—let's do something—to shed light on efforts that support a world without rape and violence.

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