

Practicing Resistance: Rooted in Love, *Kay Wallick*

Today's reflection draws on the lives of Unitarian, Universalist and Unitarian Universalist leaders who practiced resistance—from the early 1800s to the present.

Not the kind of resistance with a clenched fist,
but the kind that opens its hands.
Resistance rooted in love, in persistence, in showing up again and again.

The word *resistance* can sound sharp, political, Loud.
Yet in the Unitarian Universalist tradition, resistance has long been understood as **faith in motion**—a steady, loving **refusal** to accept injustice as inevitable.

Resistance is not only something we do in moments of crisis. It is something we can **practice** grounded in our values—over time together.

At the center of these values is **LOVE**
Not as a sentiment, but as a force, choosing compassion over apathy in the movement for justice. Let's look at our shared values and how they guide us in the practice of resistance with examples from Unitarian leaders over time:

JUSTICE asks us to speak the truth Even when it makes people uncomfortable

In the 19th century, some Unitarian ministers practiced resistance simply by naming what was wrong.

Theodore Parker, a Unitarian minister, abolitionist, and early feminist, was known for his powerful quotes on justice famously stating, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice,” inspiring Martin Luther King. Later he was lifted up by Betty Friedan--sparking the modern women's movement in *The Feminine Mystique*--where she quoted Parker in his speech from 1856:

“To make one half of the human race consume its energies in the functions of housekeeper, wife and mother is a monstrous waste of the most precious material God ever made.”

Justice speaks. Justice names. Justice refuses Silence.

EQUITY asks:

Who is being left out?

Whose voices are silenced?

And what must we refuse to make room for justice?

Olympia Brown, a Universalist and the first woman ordained in that church in 1863, practiced resistance through persistent noncooperation. Arrested multiple times for her nonviolent suffrage work, she understood these arrests not as failures, but as successes—evidence that injustice was being exposed.

Homer Jack, a Unitarian minister and pacifist, helped lead early efforts of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1942. Through efforts such as the Freedom Rides, CORE confronted discriminatory policies governing interstate travel.

Equity persists. Equity presses. Equity refuses to move on while others are left behind.

TRANSFORMATION reminds us that resistance is not about winning—it is about changing systems, hearts--and ourselves.

John Haynes Holmes was a Unitarian Minister during World War I, a pacifist inspired by Gandhi, a prolific writer of hymns and one of the founders of the ACLU, NAACP and Planned Parenthood. He believed in creating systems that further the slow, patient work of transformation—challenging unconstitutional actions and reshaping public conscience over time.

And I cannot speak of transformation without naming one of my own heroes. When I joined UU in Kansas City in the early 70's, Dr. Raymond Bragg was the minister. He had served as the Director of the Unitarian Service Committee following WWII, helped shape the Humanist Manifesto, and called us to justice in critical thinking and democratic ideals. He was also one of the founders of the Kansas City Civil Liberties Union where I worked during the 70s.

Transformation builds. Transformation changes. Transformation Endures.

PLURALISM does not mean avoiding conflict. It means staying committed to inclusion--even when it is painful.

In 1969, James Stoll became the first openly gay Unitarian Universalist minister. His very visibility was an act of resistance—one that came at great personal cost.

And yet, it helped lead to UUs 1970 resolution opposing discrimination against gay people.

Pluralism Includes. Pluralism widens the circle. Pluralism insists that belonging matters.

INTERDEPENDENCE reminds us that resistance is lived. It asks us to show up with our presence--not just our opinions.

After the violence of Bloody Sunday in Selma, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called clergy across the country to come and stand with the movement in 1965. Rev. James Reeb, a white UU minister from Boston, answered that call—not to lead or speak, but simply to stand alongside others. He was murdered by white segregationists for that choice.

He did not die in a dramatic act of defiance, but because he believed our lives are bound together.

Interdependence shows up. Interdependence believes. Interdependence brings us together.

Finally, practicing resistance calls us into **GENEROSITY**—of spirit, care, and endurance.

Resistance without care becomes brittle. Love must be renewed.

To resist over the long haul, we must make room for grief and respite, for joy and community—for the nourishment that makes the work possible.

The leaders we remember today were not perfect. They argued. They failed. They grew. What they shared was a willingness to give themselves to something larger than their own comfort--and to practice resistance as an act of love.

Resistance has always depended on many kinds of people, offering many kinds of gifts.

Satya Doyle Byock, a Jungian psychotherapist, names these gifts as **Archetypes of Resistance**—ancient roles that show up whenever communities work for transformation, justice, and freedom.

I can think of many in our fellowship who fit in these roles. As you hear them ask yourself

What feels familiar? Do you see yourself? Others?

The Healer tends to body, mind, and spirit. They show up in hospitals, on protest lines, and in quiet conversations.

If you are someone people turn to when they are hurting, you may know this role.

The Musician helps us feel both grief and hope for the future.

Through song and rhythm, they remind us we are not alone and lift our spirits when all else seems lost. Bruce Springsteen and others have created music to support us through the tragedies in Minnesota.

If you provide music in tough times, this archetype may be yours.

The Cook knows that no movement survives without nourishment.

They bring soup, casseroles, cookies, coffee, and care.

If you show love by making sure no one goes hungry—this is resistance too.

The Neighbor holds community together in many ways, offering a ride, a listening ear, a safe place to land.

If you are the one others call when things fall apart, you are practicing resistance.

The Observer refuses to let injustice happen unseen.

It takes courage to observe suffering and share it with others so it doesn't happen in the dark. Following the killing of 37-year-old Renee Nicole Good many older white women (some call them the "ICE Watch" Warriors) have intensified their efforts to "document and resist" federal immigration crackdowns.

If you feel called to watch carefully and tell the truth about what you see, this role matters deeply.

The Orator speaks words that steady us and point the way forward.

They help us remember who we are and what we stand for.

If you feel called to speak truth aloud this is a sacred role.

The Benefactor understands that movements need resources.
They give money and/or time—sometimes quietly, sometimes at risk.
If generosity is your way of showing up, it is part of the work.

The Keeper of Law defends justice when laws are bent or broken.
They protect rights and challenge abuse of power.
If you feel called to uphold justice through legal or ethical frameworks, this role is essential.

The Wisdom Keeper protects stories, books, history, and culture. They remember what others want erased.
If you are a librarian, teacher, storyteller, or archivist—or simply someone who remembers—this is resistance.

The Leader helps us find our way when the path is unclear.
If you can walk a little ahead and still look back to bring others with you, you know this role.

The Writer shapes meaning through words—facts, stories, poetry, testimony.
They help us understand what is happening and why it matters.
If writing is how you make sense of the world, your voice is needed.

The Artist uses art to protest in ways that marching can't do alone--through acting, film and visual art. They help us imagine what does not yet exist.
If creativity is how you survive and resist, your work is essential to our souls

The Organizer connects people to plans, and purpose. They turn shared values into collective action.
If you are the one who makes the phone calls, sets the agenda, and brings people together—this is your gift.

Most of us inhabit more than one archetype—and we move between them over a lifetime.

Our values remind us **why** we resist.
The archetypes remind us **how** we resist.

As I reflected on this, I asked myself: *What is my archetype?*

For much of my younger life, I was **The Organizer**—gathering people, making plans, believing that steady collective effort could make a difference.

So when Laurie asked last week whether any of us felt we might once again have to fight for justice and democracy, as we did in the 1960s and 70s, I raised my hand along with others.

In the 1970s, I served as co-chair of the Equal Rights Amendment Coalition in Kansas City. We worked tirelessly, confident history was moving with us—especially as Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s legal victories reshaped how the law treated women. But in 1982, the deadline expired. We fell three states short—after a powerful backlash by Phyllis Schlafly’s STOP ERA. They stirred fear—claiming the amendment would threaten families, blur gender roles, and unravel the social order.

For many of us, it felt like failure. And yet, as an organizer, I now know: *movements don’t always move in straight lines.*

Today, 38 states have ratified the ERA. Legal questions remain, but the work is not finished. We have two years to get this done! We can do it!

Resistance is not just about winning in the moment. It is about faithfulness—to our values, to one another, and to future generations. We plant seeds we may never see fully bloom. And sometimes, astonishingly, they do.

Closing

Rev. Ashley Horan, a UU minister and the UUA’s Vice President for Programs and Ministries, lives only a block from where Renee Good was killed. She is part of an interfaith group supporting residents through public witness—protesting, recording, and providing mutual aid in response to the killings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti. Across the country, Unitarian Universalists are doing the same. We did not need to be told to meet this moment. We just do.

UUA President Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt was arrested by Capitol Police on Thursday as she protested the Department of Homeland Security budget with leaders from various religious traditions. The gathering came after thousands of clergy and lay people, including 100s of UUs, arrived in Minneapolis for the Day of Truth and Freedom, a nonviolent moral action and march calling for the end of ICE operations in Minnesota where multiple UU clergy were also arrested.

As Side With Love reminds us: “these struggles are not abstract debates. They are moral and material battles over who belongs, who is protected, and whose lives matter.”

“May we move closer to our commitments and deeper into our faith.
May we build communities capable of courage, care, and sustained struggle.
And may we side with love—not only in what we say,
but in how we live, organize, and act together.”

So as you leave today, I invite you to hold this question gently:
Where am I being called to practice resistance now?

Not alone.
Not perfectly.
But together