

Let your mind drift. And then let it be anchored to this scenario despite any past preconceptions. Imagine being in a room of darkness. Your eyes begin to adjust, but there is still nothing but dullness cascading down your point of vision. And then something life-giving happens. A lightbulb turns on. The darkness is still overwhelming, but bearable. Your eyes are making out more shapes, but it's not enough. You need more light. And then another light bulb goes off in the room. And then another. And then another. Until the darkness that was deafening to you is becoming even more snuffed out by the light that is finding its way in. Seconds later, there is not a shadow left to call out. This did not take one light bulb or even five, but you look around and see that you are surrounded by thousands of lightbulbs. All different. All unique. But providing the same beauty and radiance. Dorothy Height addressed a very similar idea - "If I take a finger and touch you, you won't even know you've been tapped. If I take two fingers, you will know that something touched you. But if I bring all of those fingers together in a fist, I can give you a terrible blow." There is power in numbers. There is a beauty in a force so unfathomable that wickedness has no choice but to cease.

Injustice. It's a heavy word. Racism. It's deafening. Social change. It's life-giving. No matter the color of our skin or the languages articulated through our voices, we are made to be equals. For God says that "...every nation, tribe, people and language, [will stand] before the throne and before the Lamb. They [will] wear white robes and [hold] palm branches in their hands" (Revelations 7:9). For in the eyes of God, there is no difference between men and women, slave and free, Jew and Gentile; for all are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). Through every injustice, there is a loving Father who promises to bring *Justice*. To make a way. To set examples.

Throughout history, biblical and the latter, we have seen countless women that have risen up with a responsibility on their hearts to be the change they wanted to see -they were

examples and proof of God's love for justice. However, Malcolm X once wrote that black women are the most unprotected and unrecognized people in America. Being a woman means being half of the very image of God -we were all made alike to represent His very character. Today, we lift up the many names in history that have fought for the minority right to be represented equally, and today we remember women of color that took their voice back from the oppressors and used it to help set the captives free.

One of the most underrepresented groups in America are those that identify as double minorities. Anna Julia Cooper, as a black woman, recognized the "complexity of her identity"; she understood that her God-given voice was smothered by history, culture, and location. Despite the complexity and hardship that accompanied her identity as a double minority, Cooper was encouraged and embraced both sides that made her a whole woman. There is an account of Cooper standing in front of two signs, directing her to two different waiting rooms. One sign read "For Women" and another read "For Colored." There stood inner conflict and dispute. There was an imbalance. Where would she go when she was both *Woman* and *Black*. She decided, as a woman of faith, that it was her responsibility to fight with both the civil rights movement and the women's movement. She would later discover that it wasn't simple. Born into slavery in 1858, Cooper fought for her voice to be heard. As a woman, her church and the racial equality movement ignored her. As a person of color, the women's movement disregarded the black voice. Cooper didn't allow for any of this to discourage her. She created an individual identity as a woman who had a firm foundation on faith and justice. In order to secure justice for every oppressed party, she fought to educate others on how acceptable it can be to identify as a double minority in America. Cooper became the fourth black woman ever to earn and complete her Ph.D., and then she became a teacher. She once wrote, "It is not the intelligent woman v. the ignorant woman; nor the white woman v. the black, the brown, and the red, it is not even the

cause of woman or man. Nat, tis woman's strongest vindication for speaking that the world needs to hear her voice."

Cooper took her "...stand on the solidarity of humanity, the oneness of life, and the unnaturalness and injustice of all special favoritism...If one link of the chain is broken, the chain is broken." She encouraged a woman's voice. She encouraged the black voice. That they both be as powerful in the "...concrete as [in] the abstract..." We read stories about women of change throughout history that have bore the burden of the oppressed and challenged the voices of the masses. Justice is seen and demanded on earth as it is in Heaven, and we believe in a perfect God that not only commands us to love one another but to fight alongside each other -to become allies through action and voice.

Justice comes through a change of perspective and taking action. As the voices scream *No Justice, No Peace*, we hear the echo disperse like ripples in a pond. As the screams get louder, the ripples get bigger and create waves. There is power in numbers. There is power in a voice that goes against the odds and aligns themselves with the heart of God. Because we are aligned with the true character of the Lord, we feel His righteous anger, need for justice, and a heart for His children. Allow your voice to be heard. Seek to understand. And stand with our brothers and sisters whose voices have been smothered for too long. Black lives always matter.