

Activism is defined as the effort to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, or environmental change, or stasis. I've only ever touched on the notion of activism as it pertains to family politics. You know, picketing my own living room to break up the injustice of one child dominating the television show selection process for "like, FOREVER, mom!" or passing out flyers in front of my house to stop the over-proliferation of carbohydrates as the only reliable food staples in my scurvy-bound children's diet. And while the rights of one person over another to control whether they are "forced" to watch yet another freaking episode of Supernatural already when they wanted to watch Parent Trap for the four-hundredth time is important, STFU, children!

I'm expanding my horizons beyond the home front with respect to activism.

This is a momentous time in my community. I attended a meeting last night to get training as a de-escalator in the marches planned all over St. Louis over the weekend of October 10-13. (#FergusonOctober. Text HANDSUP to 90975 for updates). I was very heartened that the majority of the volunteers at the meeting were caucasian. Not surprisingly, there were several members of the faith community in attendance. The attendees ranged from old enough to remember the marches in 1965 from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama to those who were born thirty years after. There were about sixty of us. The main event on Saturday, October 11th, The Justice For All National March and Rally, is expected to attract upwards of 5,000+ people from all over the country. I hope it exceeds those estimates.

There was no "us" versus "them" mentality in that room. Just a burning desire to drive change for all human beings to be treated fairly. Solidarity. We practiced scenarios between protesters and counter-protesters as well as protesters with different approaches to the events. We also talked a lot about respect, which is a key component of talking someone who is upset and bent on violence down to earth. Respect, or rather lack thereof, is also at the heart of what happened in Ferguson on August 9th, 2014 on Canfield Lane. I suspect neither Michael Brown nor Darren Wilson felt respected on the street that day, and it cost one person their life and severely impacted the other.

I think back to the times I have been the most angry in my life and it usually had to do with my perception of the other person not respecting me. I'm fine until you grin like I'm an idiot and then I want to cut you. Lack of respect stems from a lack of understanding about the other person and a knee-jerk dismissal of their views. No matter what the legal process determines about the fate of Darren Wilson, no matter how long the momentum of the Ferguson protests last, my sincerest hope is that we can all learn to understand and respect each other regardless of the color of our skin or the neighborhood in which we live.