



Celebrating the Unsung Heroes and Breaking Down Boxes

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I want to buy a big bouquet of flowers for every person who has scheduled a hard-to-schedule meeting. And name a boulevard for each person who keeps track of the action items and next steps on a big project. I want to celebrate the note takers. The Excel sheet makers. The calculate how many slices of pizza we need figure-out-ers. I want to talk about the people who make up the infrastructure of the good work of justice and who often are the architects of the work but rarely the recipients of accolades. I bet right now you can think of those folks in your congregation. The work of making sure that the signs are printed, that someone has proofread the church bulletin or double-checked the protest route and gotten permits. This work can often be tedious and goes under the radar, but it is essential to what we do as people of faith working and yearning for a just world.

I also don't want to get lost the idea that in advocacy spaces we're being thoughtful and careful about not putting people into boxes. We're deep in our patriarchal, white supremacist society, which means we must be mindful of who is doing the caretaking and administrative tasks. I work in coalitions a lot, which means everyone is doing all the jobs. But that also means that people who present as female are often taking notes, scheduling meetings, and keeping the coalitions moving on. This shows up time and again. As people of faith, we are offered such a gift in imagining a just world restored, and our commitment to justice and compassion should be reflected internally and externally. How does this show up in your organizations or congregations? Are we doing a good enough job not only celebrating that behind the scenes work but being equitable about its distribution and burden.

As the policy advocate for domestic policy issues in the Washington Office, I get to see both sides of this story, the massive work that goes into planning advocacy and the inspirational and life-giving work that

plays out for all to see. Each person's role in advocacy is critical and valued—but I don't often see that articulated out loud. When people come to ask how they can engage in advocacy, I want to make sure we're talking about the many and varied ways they can make a difference in the advocacy space. Whether it be using a bullhorn, compiling an Excel tracking sheet, writing a poem, calling and writing legislators, or birddogging them on congressional recess, your voice is important, and I don't want that to get lost. Whatever skill you have is needed and important and deeply valued. Are you especially skilled at making cold calls? A walking thesaurus? Is one of your spiritual gifts coming up with fun yet not too corny icebreakers? Are there some drag queens in your congregation who can be a part of your Easter cantata? The list, and the need, goes on...

When we all work in concert with each other, it's astonishing what can be done—just look around. But we all know the work of advocacy is long and we need to shore one another up in the journey. As we celebrate Easter and the renewal of hope it brings, let's borrow some of that holy imagining to make our holy spaces and faithful places ones of celebration for profound prayers and also really well-made coffee. Let's join together to make sure that we're not sticking to the same way things have always been done by putting people in societally restrictive boxes. Because at the end of the day, imagining a just world for all starts with imagining that world for ourselves.

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