



Overworked, Overwhelmed, and Underpaid

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It is overwhelming to be a human right now, and especially, a policy advocate with moral groundings and call to be a prophetic witness in Washington, DC. We, as people residing in the United States, are being overworked by the current Administration and Congress' high volume of bad faith actions and propositions. And as inflation rises, we are probably all worried about our finances, leading us to feel underpaid.

This is purposeful. We are seeing a deluge of policies and actions that undermine our democracy, dismantle already inequitable systems of governance, and force us to look within our borders while the government continues to cosign and commit atrocities outside our borders. Despite the situation, now is not the time to fall into a pit of despair. Make no mistake, you should still grieve, cry and process your feelings, but we need to use our emotion as fuel. Every political feat that has been accomplished, good or bad, has required strategy. That needs to be our focus.

Over the last year, we have seen phenomenal acts of advocacy and incredible organizing on a wide-ranging number of issues. We need to be intentional about the intersection of these two things. Non-violent protest movements, on average, [take three years to accomplish lasting societal change](#). That's less than a presidential term. Each week the UCC DC office sends out an action alert to our network and thousands of people take action. It is a great way to advocate and get involved, but it should only be the first step. **Waiting for someone else to start a movement and get you involved is not going to work.**

If you are mad, sad, or overwhelmed, find three people that are feeling

something about the same issue as you. Find a time to meet and establish what the issue is, what you want to see done and who has the power to make the change(s) you seek. That information will be necessary as you start strategizing. This will not be a one-day meeting that results in immediate changes. Mentally prepare to meet for months, if not years depending on the issue. If that sounds scary or like a heavy lift, those making authoritarian decisions are counting on that being your barrier to entry. Prove them wrong. No person should be responsible for an entire movement and there are so many different ways to help and support each other. Some examples include making a meeting schedule, facilitating the meeting, taking and disseminating notes, bringing snacks to the meeting, talking to others in the community about the issue and inviting them to the meetings, writing an op-ed or letter to the editor for your local publication, connecting the group with an elected official you know, or doing research for the group.

Creating a just world for all only requires that you show up and use the gifts you have. **Your gift, no matter how small you may feel it is, is needed in this moment and in this movement.** Prepare to grow together, grieve together, and walk through hard conversations with compassion and nuance. You are not just joining a movement, you are creating a community. In these moments, community is needed more than anything else to accomplish a just world for all.

If you want to start, but don't know how, reach out to the DC office. We are here to help and delight in using our gifts to help you participate in this work. This will be hard, but it will be worth it, and from our labor, we may build something even better than what we are seeing torn down.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Helen Nwabara serves as the International Policy Advocate for the Office of Public Policy and Advocacy in the National Setting of the United Church of Christ.

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