

Our Universe Bends Toward Justice

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Abstract

Two recommended literary categories will combine to focus an allegorical interpretation of contemporary human social relations and how such relations can propel forward the evolution of the human race. Paring together Romance in Literature with Diversity in Literature illuminates that love in its many forms can be a powerful driver for understanding, acceptance, even appreciation of “the other.”

The All-Souls Trilogy written by historian, scholar Deborah Harkness, initially set at Oxford, explores how forbidden romantic love between two people from vastly diverse backgrounds challenges a thousand year old law and threatens the political power, privilege, and social order of their worlds, and even threatens their lives.

We will discuss how these allegorical concepts reside in humanity today all over the world and roadblocks they pose for peaceful coexistence among people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. We will also discuss the hopefulness of how humanity has evolved dramatically, though we have a long way to go. Dr. Martin Luther King postulated that the arc of the universe bends toward justice. We submit there is evidence to support that postulation though change does not occur in a straight vector, rather is discontinuous. For that reason, we will explore the future.

Our Universe Bends Toward Justice

This paper advances a narrative that human history continues to evolve toward justice, even though humans experience troubled times along the way. The motivation for writing it is to contribute a perspective and reminder about what history presents as the long view of humanity's trajectory. It notes that our movement toward justice is likely more of a continual journey than an end point, and that world events of the present day will often cast doubt on this perspective. A second motivator for writing this narrative is to assert that hopefulness is as powerful an incentive to advance humanity as it is energizing, especially when understood in practical, rather than fanciful terms.

We make five assertions about social progress. Collectively, these assertions offer a rationale for hopefulness, which we believe can inspire humanity.

- History supports the postulation popularized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that the moral arc of our universe is long but bends towards justice.
- Human evolution toward justice depends greatly on cultivating a spirit of us and we, rather than they and them.
- Literature has always played a role in the evolution of modern human social progress and has historically been not only a fellow traveler in this endeavor but at times a catalyst to help us see ourselves and others.
- Love in its many forms can propel human social progress by being a powerful driver for 'understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of 'the other and otherness'.
- Social progress does not unfold on its own, it requires our steadfast help.

Why This Narrative Now

Why promote a narrative now about social justice and hopefulness, during a period when forces of authoritarianism are peaking around the world and many people are listening to and acting on its draw? This is not the first time, nor will it be the last that humanity's peace and justice hang in the balance. Because there are competing narratives vying for public attention, trust, beliefs, and consequential actions. Because history is replete with lessons to learn about how to address destructive energy. Because our actions contribute to either progress, regression, or stagnation. Because in this climate social justice will not occur by magic or happenstance. It needs help.

Practicality of Hopefulness

Hope is often thought of as nice, but little more than a wish and it is certainly not a strategy. However, as a broad perspective about the future of humanity, hope is essential, even practical.

Dane Jensen writes in the Harvard Business Review, March 2022 (Jensen, 2022), "Hope is crucial for human flourishing but is a subject rarely addressed in business until the pandemic made it unavoidable. In times of great turbulence, hope can feel naïve — or worse, like a set-up for future disappointment. And yet, hope is essential to our satisfaction, motivation, health, and performance. When things look bleak, remaining hopeful is one of our toughest and most essential self-management tasks. It's tough because it requires a delicate balance of accepting that we cannot know the future, while believing things will be better than the present. It's essential because when hope is lost, so, too, is our will to endure and ultimately prevail."

Hope is an intangible quality of the human spirit that buoys human will and survival and inspires people to set goals and plan the future. Hope uplifts, it allows for creative thought that helps us continue to seek new and different ways. Hope spirals our development in thought and action upward, rather than toward devolvement and stagnation. That is what makes hope practical. It

maintains the assumption of possibility for an egalitarian existence and ushers in resilience and agency that leads to action. A powerful action of this moment would be to shift the social narrative toward hopefulness and an egalitarian human existence.

Massive world events of the present day cast a different narrative of wide-scale despair and injustice, often inferring that these tragedies, though real, are immutable. What, then, would be the point of looking toward hope during these periods of unfair hopelessness and despair? Two concurrent examples reflecting this juxtaposition of misery and hope are the COVID-19 pandemic and human displacement. They will be discussed in this section, and a third, budding authoritarianism, will be elaborated upon later. One further point, all three inflict a disproportionate social impact on marginalized communities.

Example One: COVID-19, a modern pandemic that caused catastrophic loss and upended the way we live, work, worship, communicate, get medical attention, travel, and more. A lost loved one is a lost loved one, whether affluent or impoverished. Yet, the ability to access vaccines and other resources casts a bright light on conditions that tend to protect some people and nations better than others that experience greater proportional loss and suffering.

For example, in the United States, many were protected by the privilege of working from home. However, even in such a wealthy country, homeless persons and hospital and nursing home employees and patients were at greater risk than most, as were public transportation workers and those compelled by their jobs to frequently interact with the public. Countries and communities where healthcare and vaccines were not or were only marginally available experienced a qualitatively dire impact.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates a global death toll from COVID-19 to the present at 3.3 million lost lives. WHO caveats that estimate by noting "... we are likely facing a significant undercount of total deaths directly and indirectly attributed to COVID-19...many countries still lack functioning civil registration and vital statistics systems with the capacity to provide accurate, complete, and timely data on births, deaths, and causes of deaths. A recent assessment of health information systems capacity in 133 countries found that the percentage of registered deaths ranged from 98% in the European region to only 10% in the African region." (WHO, 2023)

Covid-19 losses are incalculable in so many ways, particularly for families, friends, colleagues, and co-workers. We know we lost brilliant physicians. Might we also have lost a possible Pulitzer winner, a world class musician, grandparents so meaningful to the lives of their grandchildren, or the community activist who would have greatly contributed to the world. No life deserved to be lost in that way, gifted or not, impactful, or not. As for survivors, many still experience lingering challenges to their physical health. Furthermore, psychological and mental health challenges from this disease on individuals and entire societies may never be fully known.

According to Mental Health America ([Mental Health America, 2021](#)), "the rates of reporting frequent thoughts of suicide are the highest they have recorded in their 7-year history. Women are three to four times more likely to attempt suicide than men, but because men often choose more lethal means to attempt suicide, the suicide mortality rate of men is nearly four times the rate of women ([Callanan & Davis, 2012](#)). This was published in The American Journal of Men's Health online 2021 Jul 6, doi: 10.1177/15579883211030021 in an article entitled COVID-19 and Mental Health: Addressing Men's Mental Health Needs in the Digital World (Davis, 2021)

The miracle of modern medicine is reducing severity and death particularly for communities and countries where vaccines and treatment are available. Scientists, partnering with government agencies and philanthropists are dramatically reducing this tragedy. Though, not only science and our brilliant

scientists have caused the pandemic to turn the corner, but it has also been the stubborn resolve around the world that we would get through this pandemic, no matter what! The human will to survive unleashed a spirit of unprecedented global cooperation, unlocked resources, led to world-wide collaborations and gave people hope that we would prevail. We didn't give up and didn't give in, even with detractors along the way. Hopefulness continues to be a powerful weapon in this fight.

Example Two: Millions are displaced from their homelands, domestic homeless populations swell the metropolises, and the present-day proportion is unlike at any other time in human history. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported in May 2023 ((UNHCR), 2023) that a staggering 110 million people (more than 1% of the global population) were forcibly displaced worldwide. “The number includes refugees and asylum seekers as well as the **53.2 million people displaced inside their borders by conflict.**” Approximately 76% of refugees come from six countries, and 52% of them come from Syria, Ukraine, and Afghanistan. They are humans forced to flee their country to escape violence, threats, conflict, natural disaster, or persecution based on race, nationality, religious beliefs, political stance, or social group association.

Further, the UNHCR notes that displaced people face high risks of mortality, physical attack, sexual assault, abduction, and deprivation of basic needs. COVID-19 and the Ukraine/Russia war contributed greatly to the 222 million people currently facing food insecurity. The UNHCR has called for a global response to resolve and prevent destructive conflicts, end persecution, and address the underlying causes that force innocent people to flee their homes.“(UNHCR Report, 2023).

Turkey leads the world in the number of displaced persons it hosts, and Germany is second. The U.S. partners with countries around the world to resettle people. **Yet, while some organize to help these fellow humans, there are those who view them with disdain, because of their predicament. Our fellow humans, who are imperiled, in the eyes of some have become ‘the other.’** Forced displacement is not new. It has been part of the human experience for thousands of years because of wars, pogroms, and the holocaust. enslavement, genocide, natural disasters. **Yet, people keep going in such desperate times because hope is ingrained in the human instinct to survive.**

Cultivating a Spirit of Us and We

Many humans find it difficult to see common humanity in groups they perceive as ‘the other.’ We are ‘us’ and they are ‘them.’ History corroborates that acceptance of ‘the other’ ebbs and flows with time and with changes in public opinion. While humans are gradually getting better at accepting human differences, acceptance comes in layers. We may accept ‘the other’ at work or school, but do we accept them living next door? We may accept ‘the other’ as neighbors, but what about as family members? Or we may accept them as family members but never as life partners. If we accept ‘the other’ as a life partner, are we still ‘us’ or are we now...’them!’ And of course, this applies to different forms of ‘otherness.’ Regarding racial differences, science tells us that the idea of different human races is fantasy and a social construct that science and genetics does not support. Instead, science categorizes us as one human race with varying biological differences. Therefore, if normalizing equality evolves through the centuries, then why is it so gradual? Privilege is stubborn. It abhors the audacity of parity and uses everything within its capability to maintain power and dominance on multiple levels – individual, group, system, and nation – so as not to become ‘them.’

Erasing people and or distorting their history has been a practice of maintaining privilege that dates to antiquity. Modern-day attempts to erase people and their history are again gaining traction around the world. People are using state power to ban schoolbooks and change curricula to erase historical roles, facts, and imagery, to remove the existence of LGBTQ+ persons, to downplay the remarkable impact and contributions of women, to vilify prominent public figures that are among ‘the other,’ to decide whose

religion is proper or improper, and to even assert into public discourse that chattel enslavement was beneficial for those enslaved.

Continuing to marginalize only works marginally. It may take years, decades, or even centuries, and lots of damage can occur in the intervening periods, but the truth tends to eventually surface. It is more difficult to hide historical facts now, in an era of increasing literacy, greater access to technology, and omnipresent social media. The price of not acknowledging historical fact is to diminish space for social healing, which only slows social progress, but it does not stop it.

Literature as a Social Force

More people are better educated today than ever, and literature is key to this occurrence. Literature has long been a social force in helping us see humanity in others, and thereby moving us toward social justice. Literature plays a significant role in identifying, explaining, defining, and moving society toward a more democratic, self-actualized, and less oppressive existence. If you are not convinced that we have made progress, then just think for a moment what one's daily existence might have been like three hundred years ago, two hundred or even one hundred years ago.

Literature has helped us conceive different ways of existing, by feeding our curiosities and sparking our imaginations. Whether fiction or nonfiction, and no matter one's moral or political moorings, we can all recall that our readings taught us to capture insights about our world causing us to reflect, to wonder how society would evolve, and notice that humanity's social reality needed some repair and innovation.

Non-fiction, for example, reports or presents perspectives, data, questions, and conclusions that shape narratives about our daily existence. Of course, even when factual there is typically much room for deliberation and debate. Fiction, on the other hand, has a different way of discussing many of the same issues as non-fiction, but provides unique ways of mirroring our world.

Instead of reporting, fictional writers capture different versions of our social relations and of our behavior within them. Using such tools as allegory, fiction casts human conditions and problems into other realms and creates archetypes that conjure themes, patterns, and images by which we can brand certain identities, cultures, and societies such as the hero, the savior, the disrupter, the innocent. Fiction offers 'what ifs' that allow us to imagine a different way our world could be and how we might be different in it. Fiction can pinpoint harsh realities that sometimes bruise our perception of who we are by spotlighting our role in the scheme of things or conversely leaving us with a sense of reality that is neither factual nor reality based, yet. *The Handmaid's Tale* is such an example. It is a 1985 best-selling novel by Margaret Atwood, about a futuristic, dystopian, totalitarian, fundamentalist society in the U.S. that reduces women to property and forces them into sexual servitude.

Today people access literature as much through electronic means as through the written page. Consequently, as technology evolves our literary imaginations expand to display the human condition with evolving symbolism. For example, no longer are humans tethered to earth, in fact our stories can now find themselves on starships in the gamma quadrant, reflected through beings that are not humanoid, or by creatures living in present day alongside humans, whose problems look a lot like ours. Of course, what we make of fictional literature has a great deal to do with who we are and our social position. Said another way, do authors intend their literary works as readers perceive them or are the meanings readers make their projections? While there certainly are times we all encounter literature as entertainment with no particular social message, the authors of this article gravitate toward literature that offers possibility! Our projection, then, has a great deal to do with the societal position ascribed to us.

Forum on Public Policy

We illustrate this idea using an allegory penned in three 500+ page books entitled the *All Souls Trilogy*. This came to our notice in the last 2 years and offered a thrilling mirror about our world and our human existence. Author Deborah Harkness, PhD, might have intended only to entertain, in which case Sigmund Freud could have said about it, perhaps a cigar is just a cigar, and the meaning we make is our own projection. Either way, we found the *All Souls Trilogy* to be a remarkable, intelligent story of forbidden romantic love between two individuals of different species... a witch and a vampire... speaking of cultural differences. Their audacity to find love and happiness challenged a thousand-year fundamental law of their creature world that placed them in danger and even threatened their lives and the lives of those allied with them.

The All-Souls Trilogy was made into a popular 3-part television series on Sky TV in the United Kingdom from 2018-2022 and titled *A Discovery of Witches*. In addition to a story of forbidden love, it was a larger story of which groups held the upper hand, and which were marginalized. It mirrored class privilege and class disparity, social acceptance and shunning, and political power differences among creature groups. The series addressed either directly or by implication, matters of creature supremacy or in our world supremacy of race, color or culture, gender power differences, disregard for the lives and personhood of LGBTQ+ persons, to religious differences, ableness, child abuse, climate change, and on and on.

Our example addresses everything from witches' and vampires' historic hatred and prejudices about each other, and their fear of the other's biological powers, to how they and the daemons, for whom neither witches nor vampires had much regard, were fearful of each other though required one another for their coexistence, since they all feared the socially dominant humans.

At its core, the love manifested by that interspecies relationship threatened the social order and political power balance of millions, threatening to redefine which social group stayed on top and therefore which ones held less leverage and empowerment over their lives and their children's futures. Sound familiar?

In fact, not so long ago, on June 12, 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that laws banning interracial marriage violate the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in the case of *Loving v the Commonwealth of Virginia*. Said another way, at least in the U.S. state of Virginia, before 1967...a mere 56 years ago, it was illegal to marry or mix romantically with someone perceived to be of a different race. Well, who knew that Vampires, Witches, and Daemons could have as much trouble getting along as we humans? And would the discovery made by the witches fix any of that?

At least in the fictional example provided by the *All Souls Trilogy*, romantic love won out in the end for our witch and vampire and through it their love played a pivotal role in widening the social aperture of the creature world towards a broader theme of acceptance of all creatures over disregard and hatred. They even thought about humans differently. This, of course, is fiction, but even in a fictional world science helped them get there.

Allegorical mirrors of our world such as provided by the *All Souls Trilogy*, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, and even *Romeo and Juliette* point to the perennial problem we humans have of not seeing the humanity in people we perceive as 'the other.' Just as the creatures' sense of 'otherness' led them to manifest power struggles for dominance and privilege on one hand and resistance to subjugation against oppression on the other, so it is for humans, as well. Unfortunately, it is a challenge that is not going away anytime soon. Knowing that, what are our choices? Our choices are to behave in ways that accelerate, retard, or stagnate human progress toward a more just existence. It is in our hands.

Loves Moves Us Forward

Love is a social force. Universal love enables us to view each other as human beings instead of “othering” one another as “they” and “them”. In *The All Souls Trilogy*, our witch’s and vampire’s love was forbidden. Though they moved past this obstacle by honoring the true love in their hearts despite laws created to keep them apart. As humans existing within our respective social differences, it is fundamental that we learn to act in the love that enables us to move in hope toward acceptance and coexistence. In *The Psychology of Love*, the Cleveland Clinic discusses eight types of love that humans experience:

- Eros – Romantic, Passionate Love (Of the Body)
- Philia – Affectionate, Friendly Love
- Storge – Unconditional, Familial Love
- Agape – Selfless, Universal Love
- Ludus – Playful, Flirtatious Love
- Pragma – Committed, Long-Lasting Love
- Philautia – Self Love

Each of these facilitates our connections to one another to develop meaningful relationships. Like hope and faith, love is one of the three essential virtues of humanity most often attributed to the world’s great religions.

According to Ugandan social entrepreneur Dr. Ian Clark, Love is what we do. Hope is why we do it, and faith is what keeps us going. History not only corroborates that this concept has endured through the ages, but it also signals to us that it is never more prescient than the divisiveness of the present day. The reality that our social groups are diverse does not change the fact that we are all one human species.

However, stubborn failure to acknowledge that scientific fact often causes our differences to be interpreted and acted upon for ill resulting in negative consequences for humanity. In this stage of history, the prevailing narrative is that human diversity is divisive, instead of unifying and celebrated. Any hope for a different future requires us to change that narrative, change our individual behaviors, and change the institutional structures that sustain power and privilege.

The All Souls Trilogy illustrates the schisms that exist among creatures as a mirror to us. Some fight to hold onto the old ways, despite the threat of destruction for all of them if they continue to do what they’ve done for the past one thousand years. This is typical behavior for humans. This is typical behavior for humans. Escaping one’s comfort zone is a challenge, even when the individual decides to change. However, when change is foisted upon someone else, resistance to change is fueled by being forced out of your comfort zone.

Others may recognize the need to break with the old ways so that they bring about a new world order. However, ensuring the survival of them all may not be the goal for everyone. Power dynamics come into play as one group wants to maintain power over everyone. This is very similar to what is happening across the globe today. As with any type of social change, a critical mass is needed to champion this change and move it forward. Even in the best of circumstances, there will likely always be oppositional forces

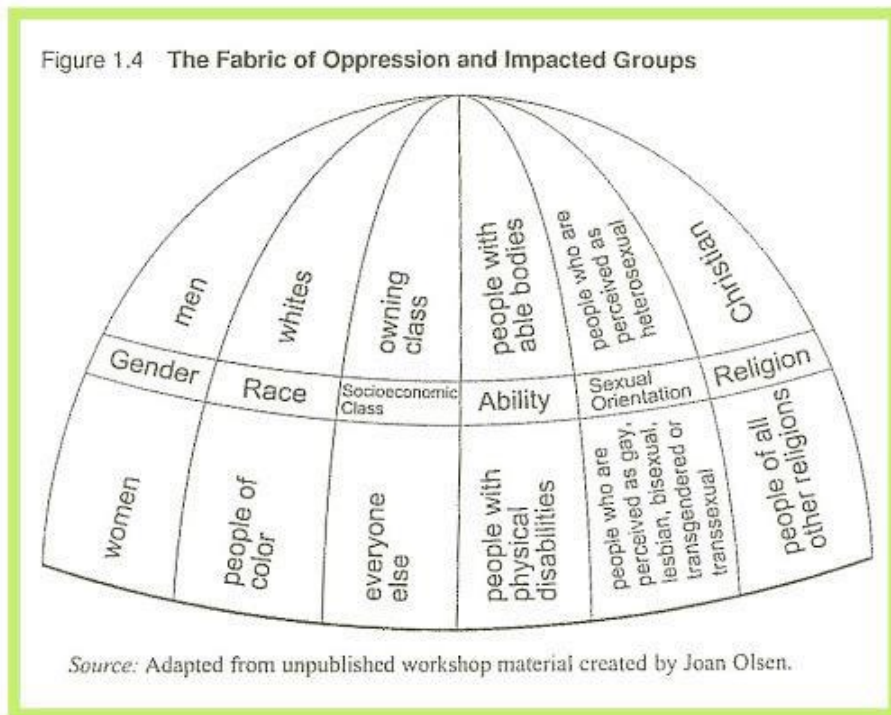
Fighting for Position Instead of Agape

“We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal.” This simple, yet profound reminder of our common humanity was spoken by John F. Kennedy, 35th U.S. President in a 1963 commencement address at American University in Washington, D.C. It also appears in literature in author Tom Clancy’s 1991 thriller novel *The Sum of All Fears* about nail-biting international superpower atomic bomb tensions. The seed of that conflict, the struggle between peace and control, does not rest with one nation; it is our collective burden and responsibility.

All over the world, there are people who live in a “bottom of the social order existence”, as we see the rise of “anti,” be it race, sexual orientation, religion, immigration, gender, age, social class, and more. The figure below illustrates how this fight for position could look among some social groups. In the grid below there are groups above the line representing holders of power and privilege, and the opposite groups below the line. without power. In the context of human diversity, power and privilege have specific definitions. Dartmouth College’s Office of Pluralism & Leadership (Office of Pluralism and Leadership, n.d.) defines the terms as follows:

Power is the ability to influence and make decisions that impact others.
 Privilege is [the] advantages and benefits that individuals receive because of social groups they are perceived to be a part of. Privilege is often a result of systematic targeting and/or marginalization of another social group.

The grid below is one view of how power and privilege exist in the United States. The social groups at the top hold power and have the privilege to define how the groups at the bottom move through the world.



The grid is not finite; it could be expanded to include age, appearance, education levels, nation status, etc. Consider these examples: Russia’s attempt to take over Ukraine, Afghanistan making it illegal for women and girls to be educated, and the U.S. Supreme Court abolishing a 50-year law that weakened women’s rights to control their own bodies and reproductive decisions. making abortion illegal across the country.

Privilege is not just about wealth, it's about the ability to move through the world without having to think about it. When it comes to having or not having power, not everyone wants to level the playing field. Some would rather have control than peace. For them, power is everything!

Government-initiated Separation

Intentional separation of people has shown up from time to time in the world. Now and again, each effort has been defeated. Three particular circumstances regulate how certain groups are allowed/disallowed to move in the world: Authoritarianism, Dehumanization, and Invisibilization.

In Germany, Adolf Hitler implemented an authoritarian approach to separate Jewish people from his “pure, white race.” Once identified, he terrorized them – men, women, and children – with little regard for their existence as human beings. Terrorizing them was the final step in dehumanizing them before their murder, thereby totally erasing them from his vision of a pure race of Germans. Historian Deborah Lipstadt describes the articles many journalists wrote after they returned home; here's one example:

“Glen Stadler, UP [United Press] correspondent in Germany, described what had happened to Jews in Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania as an “open hunt.” Some of the reporters estimated that more than 400,000 had already been killed by Hitler's “new order,” including “upward of 100,000 [Jews who] met death in the Baltic states alone, and more than that . . . have been executed in Western Russia.”

In the United States, state-sponsored terrorism ruled as enslaved Africans were captured, tortured, and forced to work for free. Women were raped to breed, and any subsequent pregnancy assured a continuing stream of free labor for the plantation workforce. Slavery was an economic development strategy sanctioned and enforced at the state and local levels. While enslavement was prevalent in the South, it was actually in operation across the United States. One would think that the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, which declared that all enslaved persons would be free, would be the actual end of the practice of slavery. The 13th Amendment to the US Constitution *only ended chattel slavery* and provided a loophole that finessed enslavement into imprisonment:

“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”

Being constitutionally free didn't guarantee freedom for African Americans then, and it doesn't now. According to the Pew Research Center, “In 2017, blacks represented 12% of the U.S. adult population, but 33% of the sentenced prison population.” There are, of course, anomalies such as African American elected officials that include President Barack Obama and Vice President Kamala Harris, black billionaires, and a growing black middle class. However, it is not the first time in U.S. history that African Americans gained substantial social prominence and wealth, such as during the post-enslavement era known as reconstruction that only lasted from 1866 to 1877. Joan Olsen's graph above is specific to the United States depicting how social groups have historically been divided along lines of power and access. Twenty-first-century exemplars of state-sanctioned terrorism would be the actions of the governors of Florida and Texas in the United States. Each has imposed laws that eliminate body autonomy for women while handing down mandates and passing laws to erase the complete histories of some marginalized groups. Benno Herzog (2018) asserts that “Exclusion and marginalization might therefore be understood as processes of silencing or invisibilizing social groups.” Threats and violence against elected officials, judicial officers of the courts, voting officials, and others is on the rise in the U.S. and in many other countries, as well, and the rule of law is being eroded. Today, an act of courage in the face of such behavior can be a matter of life or death, as the world has witnessed.

Bending Towards Justice – Love is What We Do

These few historical examples illustrate how a journey to a just society has derailed humanity multiple times and how each upset has been defeated. From Hitler's 3rd Reich and the Holocaust to the enslavement of African people around the world, we can see a continuing trend of authoritarianism leading to the Ukraine-Russia war. What we know is that derailments will occur again. How do we prepare to disrupt future societal breakdowns? In his book, *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson (Stevenson, 2014) shares that "the cases he has fought have altered his understanding of kindness, hope, justice, and mercy." Even as his spirit is exhausted by the work, Stevenson's [hope] belief in humanity propels him forward. Herzog (2018) suggests, "Making silence heard, giving voice to the silenced, and bringing the invisibilized back into the public domain are therefore fundamental tasks of solidarity in reaching a higher degree of social integration." Clark brings us back to "the practicality of hope" when he reminds us that "hope is why we do it." Having hope is necessary to hold a vision of what we want: a just society that operates in love.

"Morehouse College taught Martin Luther King Jr. that justice is love in action (as stated by Joseph Fletcher). Morehouse College taught Martin Luther King Jr. that justice is fairness (as stated by John Rawls)."

In 1968, when Dr. King affirmed the *arc of the moral universe is long and bends towards justice*,¹ he was speaking from a place of love. He was not the originator of the phrase, although he is credited with it. King repeated this from a sermon by Rev. Theodore Parker who submitted that "he did not pretend to understand the moral universe...from what I see I am sure it bends toward justice." At his core, King's message was one of love, not hate. He recognized that society needed to come together in love to work collectively towards justice. Our history of atrocities may leave us with a sense of hopelessness and despair. The Civil Rights Movement in the United States was and is about love and justice, combined. Justice is about fairness. Love helps us progress as a society. Loving others brings justice to the table.

King witnessed our world moving toward great change, though there have been obvious setbacks along the way. That shift is the continual hope of marginalized communities and all who love peace. US Congresswoman Shontel Brown from the state of Ohio proposed that the arc "does not bend on its own – it requires people to pull it towards justice." Hope for change is apparent; it shows up in our contemporary literature. Movies, books, television shows, and music like African American singer-songwriter Sam Cooke's ballad, *A Change is Gonna Come*.

This is the hopefulness of humankind, that like-minded people will unite and work toward a world that works for all of us. We each must take hold of the arc and, together, pull it forward in a spirit of "us" and "we."

In my office, I have a plate displayed on my bookshelf that reads, *Ubuntu: I am because we are*. Ubuntu is an ancient African word that means "humanity" in the Nguni Bantu language. We are not alone in our individual desire for a better world. We need each other. Those of us who are invested in the evolution of humankind must be the community change we hope to see. In the *All Souls Trilogy*, what the witches discovered provided their creature world with the science necessary to bridge the creature divide. Humanity is capable of doing this the same in today's world and to the extent that we do, we will advance humankind.

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