

I grew up in the Mennonite church, and as such I learned stories about what we stood for as Mennonites: that Anabaptists opposed military service, that we believe in justice and humbly performed good works to ease the suffering of the oppressed. There were also personal stories, family stories, I knew that while one of my grandfathers had served in the marines in the Pacific theater, my Mennonite grandfather alternative service as a conscientious objector. I remember feeling proud of that story as a kid. I recall an aunt retelling another story that I think speaks more to this moment, she went to protest the Vietnam War at the Pentagon, and was implored by the same grandparent *not* to get arrested.

When I showed up in Seattle last November to risk arrest as part of a Jewish-led protest blocking access to an iconic Seattle landmark, it was great comfort to me that I did so locking arms with a fellow Mennonite (whom I had just met that day!). Standing in the way for the next several hours listening to faith and community leaders speak about opposing injustice, I felt these recurring rising waves of emotion passing through me, that I was finally where I was supposed to be. That I was supposed to be taking a risk of *some* kind. That the risk I was taking was so utterly insignificant to the daily risk of just waking up in Gaza. That Christians need to be *seen* standing for liberation, need to be *heard*, that *our* songs about liberation need to move beyond the church walls to echo through the halls of power, need to become so loud as to no longer be ignored by those who count on our remaining as the “quiet in the land”.

I’m not here to suggest that you should take drastic action like risking arrest. Much of the last year for me has been about making peace with myself that when it comes to the cause of collective liberation there is no “right” amount of commitment. There is no action too small, just as there is no one action so great that it can shift systems of oppression all at once. Two weekends ago Mennonite Action WA chapter hosted an interfaith, Christian-led event where we sang hymns, shared food, made a banner professing our identity for future demonstrations, we assessed our collective power, the *many* connections and skills we already can bring to this struggle. A highlight was a prepared lecture looking into the context of the extreme violence & persecution present at the beginning of Anabaptist history, context that revealed parallels to the plight of Palestinians today. Context that for me made better sense of why it is so hard for people like my dear sweet grandparents, who no doubt meant well when they cautioned their own child not to take too great a risk in how *they* chose to stand up for justice. I so look forward to continuing these conversations, and to showing up in growing numbers with other Christians, because – when together we refuse to be silent – we absolutely have the power to break the cycles of violence.