

## Here are seven ways you can keep fighting for justice in 2017

It's reasonable to just want to hibernate for the next four years. But that won't help make things better



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‘We enter 2017 in full knowledge that this year will likely be no better than the last one.’ Photograph: Timothy A. Clary/AFP/Getty Images

We just ended the worst year. Now starts, well: the worst worst year. Those of us appalled and terrified by the election of Donald Trump and the open rise of white supremacy in America ended 2016 exhausted and disillusioned. Now we enter 2017 in full knowledge that this year will probably be no better.

No matter how much we'd like to hide in our homes for the next four years, we know that we cannot do that. We must fight for equality and justice. But the question is: how? What action can we take in the aftermath of such a heartbreaking defeat?

As we start this new year, here are some resolutions for resistance.

## **Check your sources**

Yes, we are really living in a dystopian future where we can't be sure of what is true and what isn't. A sensational story crosses your eye? Yes, it may well be accurate. But it could also be made up by a teenager in a basement in Milwaukee, because we apparently live in a horrible world these days.

Check the links on all articles to verify that those links actually back up what the original article is saying with source material. No links? Try to find a more reliable source to back up the story. No luck? Then do not share that story. Write down the name of that publication and avoid them in the future.

Check the "about us" page of unfamiliar sites: is there actual staff? A lot of fake news sites will try to avoid criticism by calling themselves "satire" (note: the Onion is satire; fake news sites are really trying to trick you). Other red flags: website names that are close but not quite the same as established and reputable news sites, lack of dates on articles, lack of author name on articles, anonymous sources that can't be verified (ex: "a friend said", "someone at the scene said", "our sources say").

## **Diversify your news**

The internet gives us a plethora of potential news sources. But we can still find ourselves consuming a dozen versions of the exact same viewpoint and convincing ourselves that we are well-informed.

When I was an undergrad political science student, I had an international relations professor who not only required that we read three separate and very different papers each day, but that we read the local, national, international and economic sections of each.

Then she would discuss a topic that had appeared in the papers and would test our ability to separate facts from the multiple interpretations given across the papers. This exercise taught me how widely the truth can be shaped and stretched, and how there can indeed be multiple truths for very important issues, depending on viewpoint.

It's a lesson I try not to forget. Try to diversify not only the subject matter you read, but the ideology of the publishers and the identities of the writers.

## **Put your money where your mouth is**

Make this the year that your money does the talking. Upset about the housing crisis in your area? Donate to a shelter. Believe in abortion rights? Donate to Planned Parenthood. Believe in small business? Shop local. Believe in equal opportunity? Support minority-owned businesses.

And don't put your money into the businesses and banks that profit off the oppression of others or the destruction of the environment.

## **Pay attention to local politics**

Guess what? There will be an election in 2017, and in 2018, and, well – you get the point. Local elections are where your vote counts the most and local votes are some of the most important votes you can make.

What happens in your town can affect what happens in your county, then your state, your region and, ultimately, in the nation. School levies, minimum wages, city council elections – these votes have a real and almost immediate impact on your life and the lives of your community. Don't give that power away. Stay informed about what is happening locally. And vote.

## **Decentralize whiteness**

Just about every aspect of western culture centralizes whiteness. Our history, infrastructure, medical system, justice system, education system, entertainment industry – and yes, our social justice organizations – all do this. Whiteness is default, it's ubiquitous and it's insidious.

We don't have to purposefully center whiteness. When we neglect to decentralize it, it will be automatically centered. So work to decentralize whiteness: in your children's school lessons, in your PTA meetings, in your office meetings, in your city council meetings, in the film and TV you watch, in the music you listen to, in the leaders you support. If you do not decentralize whiteness in your movements for progress, you will leave people of color behind. And what kind of progress is that?

## **Understand your privilege**

Just about all of us have some privilege, and it is very important for us to be aware and to be willing to name that privilege.

Your privilege is where you have the most power. Your privilege is the little piece of an oppressive system that you own and can therefore change. For example, I am not disabled – this is a major area of privilege for me. I'm very glad that I know this, because, when I am asked to speak on diversity panels, I can ask if there will also be disabled speakers, ramps and sign language interpreters.

My privilege means that I'm asked to speak at more panels than disabled people are. My voice is in the room while disabled voices are not: being aware of that keeps me aware of my power to help change that. If I refused to recognize that privilege (and there was a time where I would have let guilt or just fear of confrontation keep me from doing so) I would simply remain a part of an oppressive system, even while claiming to work for liberation.

## **Remember what you're fighting for**

It is very easy to become hyper-focused on what we're fighting against – neo-Nazis, Islamophobia, racism, sexism. But nothing is a better and more important motivator than what we are fighting for. We are fighting for our communities, for our families, for our future.

What keeps you in the battle? Keep that close to your heart and let it be the light that guides your way.

Ijeoma Oluo - The Guardian