

THE AWAKENING PROJECT

*Interfaith Prophetic
Voices*

EXPLORING THE WORLDS
OF LEADERS OF FAITH

JANUARY 2021

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INTRODUCTION

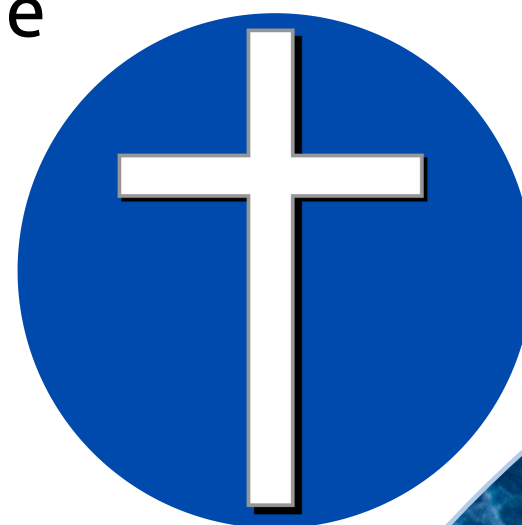
INTERFAITH PROPHETIC VOICES

The Awakening Project's mission is to listen to prophetic voices as a way to awaken ourselves to the radical call of our faith in our actions for social justice and transformative change. Coupled with the vision for inclusivity and a deep appreciation for interfaith dialogue and harmony - this issue seeks to highlight some prominent prophetic voices across the major faith traditions.

Highlighting the faith traditions of Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, & Sikhism prophetic voices across each religion will be examined. Aligning with the Awakening Project's specific focus to social justice issues, the prophetic voices will be those that emphasize the importance of protecting society's most vulnerable.

The purpose of this issue is to showcase the diverse beliefs and frameworks of thinking from different religiously affiliated social justice activists. The purpose of this issue is to showcase the diverse beliefs and frameworks of thinking from different religiously affiliated social justice activists. The overarching message is that though different religions have different beliefs, the core values of compassion, humanity, and demonstrating an ethic of care for the most vulnerable members of society are prevalent throughout these faith traditions.

We hope you enjoy!



**All bodies of text are excerpts from sources referenced at the end*



HINDUISM

SWAMI AGNIVESH

Over the years, Swami Agnivesh has been many things: an anti-corruption activist, a prisoner, and a politician. He's negotiated with Maoist rebels, campaigned against female infanticide, and headed the World Council of Arya Samaj, a Hindu reformist movement. But he's best known for his work for interfaith tolerance, and his organization Bandhua Mukti Morcha (BMM), or the Bonded Labour Liberation Front.

As much as Mr. Agnivesh's career is multifaceted, his lifestyle is simple. The monk does not own property and has little money in the bank. Yet he has inspired social workers and activists of all ilks in India. Swami was often seen in his saffron cultural clothes and claimed that the saffron, 'is my uniform for socio-spiritual action, a call to battle on behalf of the oppressed.' Saffron is the color of sacrifice, commitment and purity and he believes it helps him in his work of love, truth, compassion and justice.



“The real seekers were the prophets, not priests ... The priest is a follower and the prophet is a rebel and revolutionary ... That's what attracted me to this path – the prophet and the revolutionary character”

JUDAISM

HELEN SUZMAN

Helen Suzman is a longtime anti-apartheid activist South African MP. Suzman visited Nelson Mandela frequently when he was jailed and serving a life sentence on Robben Island. Thanks to her persistence, Mandela received more humane treatment. Suzman exemplified and championed the human rights and social justice that we as humanists value and support, but she also brought to bear Jewish values and the Jewish historical experience.

She also embraced reason and evidence-based thinking, as witnessed in her eloquent addresses to the South African parliament on the conditions of black South Africans under apartheid. While Suzman's primary focus was the struggle against apartheid, she also worked for women's rights by supporting legislation to guarantee equality in marriage and divorce, reproductive rights, and other protections.

Suzman was the only woman member of South Africa's parliament at the time and one of five Jewish members. Suzman never failed to investigate the often-tragic consequences of apartheid legislation. Although she represented an affluent white constituency, she saw herself as an "honorary ombudsman for all those people who have no vote and no Member of Parliament." When Nelson Mandela eventually became President, he awarded her his country's highest public honour, for her years of campaigning against the cruelty of South Africa's race laws.



“My knowledge of the Jewish experience of persecution heightened my awareness of the evils of discrimination ... Supporting race discrimination was the ultimate treachery of [Jewish] values”





CHRISTIANITY

SHANE CLAIBORNE

Shane Claiborne is a prominent speaker, activist, and best-selling author. Shane worked with Mother Teresa in Calcutta, and founded The Simple Way in Philadelphia.

Shane is a champion for grace which has led him to jail advocating for the homeless, and to places like Iraq and Afghanistan to stand against war. Now grace fuels his passion to end the death penalty and help stop gun violence.

The Simple Way community collectively chooses to “love God, love people, and follow Jesus.” His way of life—of loving extraordinarily—is spectacular in light of our broken world, but normative in light of Jesus.



“*And I think that's what our world is desperately in need of - lovers, people who are building deep, genuine relationships with fellow strugglers along the way, and who actually know the faces of the people behind the issues they are concerned about*”

Claiborne is credited for modelling “the ways in which Christianity is countercultural,” and for encouraging young Christians to ask “deep, difficult questions” — “because that’s what Jesus did.” During his volunteer time with Mother Teresa he internalized her mantra that each time they served a poor person, they were serving Jesus himself. Some nights Claiborne and peers slept on the streets with the poor; other times they brought homeless children back to let them sleep in their dorm rooms.

ISLAM

TAWAKKOL KARMAN

Tawakkol Karman is a 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winner and a Yemeni activist. She was the first Yemeni and first Arab woman to win the prize, which she won for her work protecting women in Yemen and pushing for women to be a part of the peace-building process in that country. To accomplish this goal, she co-founded the group Women Journalists Without Chains in 2005, led protests in Yemen's capital of Sana'a, and participated in the Arab Spring protests in 2011.

She has promoted the struggle for democracy and human rights in Yemen at the international level, including at the UN. Her work advocates for the nonviolent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace building work in Yemen. A journalist by profession and human rights activist by nature, Tawakkol responded to the political instability and human rights abuses in Yemen by mobilizing others and reporting on injustices.

Bold and outspoken, Tawakkol has been imprisoned on a number of occasions for her pro-democracy, pro-human rights protests. Amongst Yemen's opposition movement, she is known as "mother of the revolution" and "the iron woman." Fiercely committed to change, Tawakkol spends the majority of her time in a tent in Change Square, where she continues her peaceful protests for justice and freedom.



“The solution to women's issues can only be achieved in a free and democratic society in which human energy is liberated, the energy of both women and men together. Our civilization is called human civilization and is not attributed only to men or women.”



SIKHISM

VALARIE KAUR

Valarie Kaur is a renowned Sikh activist, filmmaker, and civil rights lawyer who declares that revolutionary love is the call of our time - a radical, joyful practice that extends in three directions: to others, to our opponents, and to ourselves. She says that other than bonding two humans together, it is also a potent force for delivering social justice. Kaur had teamed up with a number of other like-minded activists to start a particular social media effort surrounding love and community.

She hopes that this will encourage individuals to give back love and use it as a good resource in an increasingly polarized world. She has taken the assistance of others who like her want to subdue to a horrific rise of hate and rage. She believes we must resist dangerous policies and acts of hate that threaten our most vulnerable communities. She advocates for the staging of a cultural interventions to birth a new future. Her mission: to equip our movements and communities with tools to labor in love. When we pour love in these three directions, then love becomes revolutionary.



“ True understanding is not possible unless we risk changing our worldview. Otherwise we think we have built bridges to one another, but the bridges are rooted in sands that can shift with the tide ”

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