

**Sparks and Matches:
Igniting the World-Changing Power of Women**

by

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Introduction:

The current state of the world can be overwhelming—humanitarian crises, climate change, racism, trafficking, war, gender based violence... it's a *lot*. Many people have resigned themselves to the fact that there's nothing they can do about it. The fact that you picked up this book tells me that you're not that person. You might be overwhelmed by the issues and unsure of where to start, but you have not given up hope.

You *want* to make a difference; you just don't know how... *yet*.

The goal of this book is to help you figure that out. Because it's only when regular people like you and me decide to *make change happen* that anything truly changes. Whether or not you've identified it for yourself, everyone has something that they are passionate about – something that resonates so deep in their gut that it feels like fire. We are meant to burn for something.

Issues that make our hearts burn are the ones that we are meant to do something about. We've been taught to ignore these passions (for reasons I'll get to later), but just imagine if we didn't! If we were all actively trying to make a difference within the issues we care about deeply, the world would undoubtedly be transformed.

I've seen the difference that one person can make. And I'm not talking about the rare "normal" person that ends up on the world stage because she stumbled across the next big thing or invented something ingenious. I'm talking about you and me and the unglamorous business of making change happen however we can, wherever we are. I haven't changed the whole world, but I am changing my piece of it. And I'm nobody. I'm not famous. I'm not rich. I have a job, a husband, two little kids, and a mortgage. If I can do this, *you* can do this. I look at

my friends who are actively addressing the issues that light their hearts on fire, and I know they are the ones who are going to change things. *We* are the ones who are going to transform the world. One piece at a time.

So...how do we do this? First, we must understand our role in this hyper-globalized world. Humanity is more interconnected than it has ever been before, and we cannot tackle these issues until we understand how our lives interact with those around the globe.

Before we get too far, let's have a quick conversation about the language we're going to use to describe the world and our role in it. There are two phrases I will use quite a bit: Global North and Global South. These are the terms I'll use for describing developed countries and developing countries – which are loosely divided between the Northern and Southern hemispheres. The Global North includes the US, Canada, Europe, Russia, Australia, New Zealand and a handful of the most developed Asian countries (Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea and a few others). The Global South includes Central America, South America, Mexico, all of Africa, the Middle East (except Israel) and most of Asia. These terms are not perfect, but they help us understand our role in the world, which is where we must start if we want to make a difference.

Understanding our role is critical because the oppression of women in the Global South is wrapped up in the systemic exploitation of women in the Global North. And by the same token, so is our salvation from those oppressive systems. Globally, women need to escape from oppressive cycles of manipulation that hold us all down. And we are our own ticket out. Smashing these systems will require humility, honesty, sacrifice and mutuality. We are all in this together, so we need to start acting like it.

Some of this may be difficult to hear and process, but hang in there! We can't address these problems until we see them clearly. And as the old adage goes: a problem well-stated is problem half-solved. Once we get a clear idea of our place and understand the situation, the next step is to identify the principals for making effective change. This is where a lot of people get tripped up—they don't take the time to learn, so their well-intentioned efforts have no impact or even do more harm than good. I'll show you how to avoid screwing up and how to make a real difference, even if you aren't hyper creative, brilliant, rich, or famous.

Then it's just a matter of doing it! I realize this is easier said than done... but as I am constantly reminding myself and my children, difficult is not the same as impossible. I've got a slew of resources to help you get started. This book will help you figure out what you're passionate about, where/how to get involved, how to use your current skills for the issues you care about, and how to bring others along on this journey with you.

You've seen the issues and you care about them. You wouldn't be reading this book if you didn't. So don't stop there. Maybe you think that only Emma Watson or Malala or the guy who started TOMS shoes can make a difference, but that simply isn't true. *You* can make a difference. All you need is a basic understanding of how the system works, principles for effective change-making, and the tools to move forward. This book provides all those things.

You're out of excuses. Let's do this.

PART I – The Solution and the Problem

Chapter 1: A Trifecta of Change Potential

With the state that the world is in, it's easy to get overwhelmed by both the problems and the solutions. We are constantly bombarded with global injustices and cries for help. The problem, though, is that there doesn't seem to be any great answers for *what to do about it*. Most of the available resources for how to positively contribute to social change focus on two things: 1) one-in-a-million innovative people who inspire the whole world with their genius idea or 2) charity and financial support. As far as number one goes, the truth is that while innovative ideas are awesome and important, they are not the only way to make change. And secondly, while there absolutely is a need for charity, money is not a sufficient response to the crises that we face as a human family. Many of us also have an urge to *go* places to address problems personally, and while some people are able to go to the Global South and make real, effective, change, by-and-large that is not what the world needs from those of us in the Global North.

If we want real change, we have to interrupt the cycles and systems of injustice that keep people in poverty, enable violence, destroy the earth, etc. We will learn a little bit about how these systems work in the next couple of chapters, but first I want to offer a glimpse of the solution so we can keep it in mind as we learn about the problem.

A lot of us wish that there was some kind of silver bullet to fixing these broken systems and structures. That there was one thing we can do to make all the difference. Unfortunately, that's not how it works. Like most worthwhile endeavors, changing unjust social systems takes perseverance, determination, and hard work.

The good news is that it is absolutely possible. We all need to pitch in and do our part. We need to figure out what we can do, with what we have, and where we are, to interrupt these cycles and systems of injustice.

There are three broad categories of change-making tactics that we can use to make a difference:

- lifestyle change
- social influence
- advocacy/activism

Most recommendations for how to make a difference focus on one or the other of these three approaches. But the fact is that on their own, none of these things are very effective – it simply isn't enough.

But combined, done well, and on scale, these tactics will be unstoppable.

The truth is that every action you take has an impact on someone, somewhere, and we get to choose what that impact is. Everything we do - our consumer choices, social media posts, private conversations, and political action (or inaction) – sends a message and makes an impact. You might think that you are just one person and that your existence doesn't have that many implications, but that's simply not the case.

In our modern society, impacting the world around us is unavoidable. For example, everything we buy effects someone, somewhere – whether it's a local farmer or a textile worker in Bangladesh. Everything we say communicates how we perceive reality and therefore influences the way others perceive it. Because most governments in the Global North at least

ostensibly run on the power of the people, every interaction with our local, state, or federal institutions sends some kind of message to the government.

And we cannot simply opt-out of the system. Because even opting out sends a message. What we buy, matters. But what we *don't* buy also matters. What we say and do around our friends is important. But what we *don't* say is also important. Not participating in the legislative process can often send just as powerful of a message as showing up. We cannot simply get quieter and think that our impact lessens, because sometimes it's the silences that speak the loudest. Regardless of whether or not we are controlling the message we are sending (or if we're even aware that we're sending one!), we are communicating *something* – to corporations, manufacturers, friends, family, politicians, financial institutions, and even to people on the other side of the world.

This means that every dollar, every word, and every political or corporate action is a potential opportunity to send a message about what kind of world we want and every choice is a chance to shape the world. The fact that we live in the Global North means that we have more opportunities than most people in the world, simply by nature of where we live. Our wealth (compared to the rest of the world) and relative freedoms create dozens of opportunities each day to send a message about how we want our country and our world to be. Privileged women in the Global North were essentially born with a megaphone to help define our culture, economy, and society. Corporations, politicians, and other powerful entities are tuned into what we have to say. But sometimes, when people are born with a megaphone, they think it's normal to have such a loud voice. Are we aware that we're sending powerful and

important messages? What kind of world are we shaping by the way we live, buy, speak, and act? This is not a rhetorical question. It's something we need to deeply consider and address.

Sending messages through lifestyle change, social influence and advocacy may sound trite. But when used creatively, they are surprisingly powerful tools that go beyond the over-simplified, watered-down ideas we often hear. However, I do admit that these tactics can feel more mundane than I wish they did. In light of "changing the world", these things may feel insignificant – but they're not. They are the only effective way to actually change the world. We will delve into how and why it has to be done this way in the next chapter.

Let me give you an example so you can see both the unglamorous process and remarkable impact of these tactics when they're done together. In an effort to stay away from the over-used examples of change-makers that are often inaccessible – like Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, or Rosa Parks, let's look at a more realistic and personal one.

The Truth About Chocolate

In 2007, my husband and I were in our first year of marriage and took a trip back to Maui - where we had met and fallen in love. We were staying with our friends Mike and Ciara and, in an effort to be good house guests, we went to the store on our first day and bought a bunch of food to contribute. When our friends got home and saw that we had purchased Oreo cookies, Mike made a half-serious joke about how we had brought slave-tainted chocolate into his house. At this time, modern-day slavery was not the social buzz-word that it is today, so we were understandably taken aback and confused. Mike and Ciara explained that they listened to a podcast about slavery in the chocolate industry and learned that most cocoa beans were harvested by oppressed people in west Africa. When they became aware of the issue, they

committed to only eating chocolate that was Fairtrade certified to avoid supporting slavery with their purchase. Ciara acknowledged that it was a small response to a massive issue, but it was what they could do. Being fairly ignorant about the problem, I think I said something about the whole thing being ridiculous (I may or may not have half-jokingly called them hippies), and changed the subject while enjoying my Oreo.

When we got home, I learned more about it and it turned out that they were totally right - my treat came at a cost. And at that point, if I continued to purchase chocolate that I knew was harvested by slaves, I would send the message that I was ok with it. Mike and Ciara, on the other hand, were using their money to send a clear message that they were not ok with it.

That issue, and our friends' response to it, was formative for me. They made a lifestyle change and then used their social influence to get others to do the same. Since 2008, our family has also been committed to only eating Fairtrade chocolate and to getting as many people as we can to do the same.

In the beginning, there were a few awkward moments when people offered us chocolate and we turned them down, but it also provided an opportunity to tell them about the issue. I got really good at sprinkling in lots of self-deprecating humor so it didn't feel like I was bashing people over the head about their "slave-tainted" chocolate. My goal was empowered action – not guilt.

Only eating Fairtrade chocolate also presented a great way to teach my kids about how the world works and how we can love people with our purchases. I was not as strict about what my kids ate, but they took the concept to heart and were notorious for asking if chocolate was

Fairtrade before they took a cookie or a candy. That question coming from a 4-year-old has a way of sticking in people's minds and after a little while, all my close friends were buying Fairtrade chocolate.

A decade ago, it was difficult to find ethical chocolate. I remember buying a bar of dark chocolate at the only local market that stocked Fairtrade chocolate to chop up for cookies because I couldn't find Fairtrade chocolate chips or chocolate desserts. I was disappointed by how many stores didn't carry any Fairtrade chocolate at all and by the limited selection at the ones that did. So I started talking to the managers of every store I frequented and asked them to stock a decent selection of ethically sourced chocolate. Target, Safeway, QFC, Walgreens, Trader Joe's – they all got requests to carry Fairtrade chocolate. I had one manager roll his eyes at me and another guy actually said "isn't slavery over?" at which point he got an earful about how it definitely *isn't*. But for the most part, people were kind, willing to listen, and open to asking their buyer to consider it. I also sent emails, signed petitions, wrote letters, tweeted, and made phone calls to major chocolate companies asking them to clean up their act.

And the message got through. Today, ten years later, I can pick up a bag of ethically sourced chocolate chips at Costco and find a dozen different types of fair trade chocolate at Target. There's even fair trade ice cream, peanut butter cups, cookies, cake mix and frosting.

Now, I'm not saying my friends and I changed the system. But we did contribute to the change by altering our lifestyle, using our social influence to get others on board (which multiplies quickly), and actively demanding that corporations do better. Collectively, the people of the world have sent a strong enough message that it literally changed the chocolate industry. As a result, the lives of hundreds of thousands of people have been improved as more and

more farms adopt Fairtrade principals in order to keep up with consumer demand. Because individuals are taking a stand, there are more and more fairly paid agricultural workers who have the means to make a good life for themselves and their families. The industry still has a long way to go, but if we keep at it, the top dogs will eventually lose so much market share that they will have to change their ways.

This is a small example of how consumers can use their power, influence, and platform to interrupt systems of injustice and violence around the world. The bottom line is that if we oppose something, we must stop supporting it and actively oppose it instead. We need to realize that we are sending a message and start controlling what that message is. I believe we care enough, so let's find a way to communicate that to the people who can do something about it!

Economically and socially speaking, women have the power to make change happen. We just need to make our demands known. If we take a stand about issues that matter and tell the world how we want it to be, it will become that way. Cycles of oppression can and must be interrupted. But it's not going to happen on accident.

But Why Women?

My focus on women for igniting social change is not accidental, nor am I trying to exclude men. There are several reasons that I believe women are the key to driving social change.

First of all, in a patriarchal society, we cannot expect those in power wake-up one day and decide to end the injustices from which they benefit. We've literally been waiting for that *forever*. It's time to accept the fact that it's not going to happen unless *we* make it happen.

Second, I believe that women are particularly undervalued and underutilized when it comes to making social change. Women are so *busy* with everything we are supposed to do and be that we have few resources left for social action. But if we actively engaged the issues we care about, the power that we would bring to them would be absolutely unstoppable. More on that in the next chapter.

Third, we are the largest economic growth market in the world (Silverstein and Sayre). As the primary consumers and key decision makers for most financial decisions, we run the economy. That gives us significant power to shape global systems.

Fourth, psychologically speaking, women are uniquely able and statistically more likely to take collective action on behalf of others. A study done about gender and social beliefs found that “women are more likely than men to express caring and compassion toward those who are different from them” and that “compared to men, being empathic with others tends to be more important to women’s self-concept” (Kellmeier 2005). The study goes on to explore the fact that women tend to be less rigid in their beliefs and have a lesser need for simple and structured social constructs than their male counterparts (Kellmeier 2005). This means that women more readily embrace diversity, are more comfortable with complex and potentially messy social concepts, and tend to have their identity more wrapped up in the well-being of others. While I acknowledge the wide-sweeping generalizations of this study, it supports the idea that women are the most likely demographic to take social action on behalf of others.

There are a multitude of examples of women coming together to collectively demand social change. In the US, we have examples across history – from women’s contribution to ending slavery (particularly the brave and indispensable involvement of black women in freeing

their own people), the suffrage movement, the civil rights movement, the women's movement of the 1970's and 1980's, and most recently the Black Lives Matter movement which was started by three women. Around the world, we also see inspiring examples of women sparking and leading movements that push for justice, equality, and positive social change. This has been especially true throughout Africa and Latin America as more and more women rise up to change their situation and push back the forces of injustice that are seeking to benefit at their expense. The peaceful revolution in Yemen several years ago, largely initiated and run by women, is another example of how women can make massive, sweeping cultural changes when they decide to do so. Indeed, women's ability to organize and act collectively is one of our most powerful assets. So, how can we, in our own worlds, harness this collective potential to create social change?

In order to come together and create social change, each of us must learn about and understand our own place in the system, our impact on the world, and feasible possibilities for making positive change. Are you ready?

Chapter 2: Our Situation

After the last several years of movements, books and publicity campaigns, most people are at least nominally aware of the fact that women are oppressed and exploited in some way, shape, or form in every country in the world. But what many of us may not realize is that the exploitation of women around the world is interconnected and interdependent. We are all part of a global cycle that uses women for economic gain to the detriment of ourselves and one another. Regardless of the form it takes, the way women in the Global North are undervalued is part of the same system that exploits women in the Global South. And this systemic oppression drives the global economy. At first glance, this might seem far-fetched or overly dramatic, so let me explain.

Let's start with ourselves – women in the Global North.

Let's consider our role in modern society. A lot has changed over the last 60 years with regards to women's social roles and responsibilities, but at least one thing hasn't: women continue to be the primary consumers. If anything, that even more true today than it was a few decades ago. According to Bridget Brennan, the author of *Why She Buys: The New Strategy for Reaching the World's Most Powerful Consumers*, "women drive an estimated 70-80% of consumer spending with their purchasing power and influence" and "influence 91% of all household purchases" (Brennan). In fact, in 2010, women represented a growth market more than twice as large as India and China combined (Silverstein and Sayre). Women buy stuff. A lot of stuff.

Why do we do that? We certainly don't *need* most of the things we buy even though we are often convinced that we do. I believe there are two reasons:

First, most products targeted at women play on, or create insecurities, insufficiencies, or a felt need to change/improve themselves to become a more acceptable version of “woman”. Throughout history, when economies need a boost, marketers and corporations turn to the creation of “new markets” which often means convincing people that they need something. Instead of finding a new way of meeting an existing need (the way great businesses do), some corporations resort to actually *creating* new needs. Often, this means convincing women that they are unacceptable in their natural state and need certain products to “fix” themselves.

For example, back in the early 1900’s in the wake of World War I, governments and businesses were trying to rebuild the economy through the creation of new markets. At this time in history, women didn’t shave their underarms. But in the mid 1920’s, razor companies, including Gillette, ran a series of “instructional” ads that “publicly defined underarm hair as ‘superfluous,’ ‘unwanted,’ ‘ugly’ and ‘unfashionable,’” and offered a series of products to remove it (Hope 95). The message was that women were objectionable unless they shaved, so women bought razors and depilatory creams in order to “fix” these “problems” and ensure that they were not objectionable. After World War II, marketers doubled-down on their effort to grow the economy by creating more “needs” for women, with a particular focus on women’s bodies. Women were told that they must remove their leg hair, that “their breath was bad...and that ‘feminine daintiness’ demanded a certain type of sanitary napkin” (Hope 98).

Now, more than 60 years later, this formula is used on women in hundreds of shame-inducing ways to sell us products that “fix” our hair color/texture, body shape, finger nails, skin, eyelashes, breast size, etc. This has gotten so out of hand that every major deodorant brand now offers a product to lighten women’s armpits – who knew that the color of our armpits was

a problem? I mean, thank God that Secret was there to inform us of this problem and provide a solution! While some women might, in fact, have darker skin in their underarms, the idea that it is a problem or something that we need to “fix” is clearly invented since there is no such problem for men.

Now, take that example and multiply it by literally everything. Take a minute and think about your last few purchases – how many of them were for the purpose of altering or improving yourself in some way that your male counterparts will never experience?

Here’s the bottom line: corporations, marketers, and ad agencies make us feel terrible about ourselves so we will spend, spend, and spend trying to become an acceptable form of “woman” that always remains just out of reach. Our fabricated insecurities drive the economy and satisfy corporate greed in the process. Women in the North need to be socially and culturally oppressed enough that we buy hundreds or thousands of products every year to drive growth. For example, the global cosmetics industry was a \$460 billion industry in 2014 and is expected to reach \$675 billion by 2020. According to a report by Research and Markets, “increase in spending income, especially in...developing countries is driving the market” (Global Cosmetics Market). So, the more money we make, the more we spend on being more perfect, and yet we never manage to *arrive*.

Now, I realize that not every make-up purchase is the result of socially-fabricated insecurities – some women just like make-up, and they are obviously allowed to do whatever they like. Feminism assures us that we can choose whatever we want when it comes to make-up. But I would venture to guess that the majority of us who wear make-up everyday do so because of social and cultural expectations that “put-together” women wear make-up.

And there are so many things women have to maintain in order to be acceptable that it's practically a full-time job! Between the house that looks like Pinterest, a wardrobe that strikes that perfectly unattainable balance of sophisticated/fun /flattering/hip, being sexy but not sexual, and God-forbid we should *age!* We just can't keep up with everything we need to buy and do and *be*.

Imagine how much we would gain if women suddenly had all that time, money, energy to spend on other things? We could pursue our passions, be who we were meant to be, and create a more equal society. However, also take a moment to think about the economic fallout of women being seen as put-together in their natural state – the world would “lose” billions of dollars in product sales. And just like that, the wellbeing of women has massive political and economic implications. That's a lot riding on the cultural norm of women not being good enough as we are. And which will win? The wellbeing of women and society? Or those billions of dollars? It's easy to see which is winning at the moment.

Second, we spend an inordinate amount of time shopping for things we don't actually need because of a shift in traditional gender roles. Women have traditionally been responsible for creating and maintaining culture, community, and family in particular ways, but those roles have changed over the last century. Throughout history, women's work – weaving, churning, baking, sewing, etc. – was productive, fulfilling in multiples ways, and often resulted in tangible cultural inputs. The way we spent our time, and the products we created, shaped culture, offered a sense of accomplishment, provided an opportunity for artistic expression, and allowed women to socialize with one another in the process (Christ 134). As we've modernized, most of these domestic duties have been done away with and replaced with shopping. Instead

of churning butter – we buy it. Instead of sewing our clothes – we buy them. Our contribution to our family tends to be as primary consumer – we are more likely to do the grocery shopping, the back-to-school shopping, and the Costco runs.

Carol Christ points out that this change of roles radically impacts the perceived social value of women because “consumption rather than production becomes the norm” for women. And this, she argues, “brings with it a diminishing of women’s sense of self-worth” (135). Because, really, how much meaning does purchasing actually provide for women? Since we also tend to do our errands by ourselves, or with our children, our transition to consumer has also diminished our opportunity for quality time with both our friends and our children. I imagine that weaving and churning offer more opportunities for meaningful conversations and interactions with our children than trying to navigate a superstore with a toddler in tow.

I’ll never forget the moment a few years ago when my 4-year-old daughter was trying to work out how our family functioned and observed that “Dada surfs and Mommy goes grocery shopping”. In her mind, that is what I did with my time, and in reality, she probably wasn’t too far off. I also worked, but she didn’t get to see that part of my life very much, so my role in the family was that of “shopper”. It was a heartbreaking moment that revealed the gender stereotype I was creating. Her observation became one of the driving forces for making several major life changes.

Now, I’m not arguing that we should go back to churning our own butter or weaving our own fabric (unless that’s your jam – then go for it). But I *am* suggesting that our culture has lost some opportunities for meaningful contributions from women. We used to control and preserve cultural traditions, practical knowledge, and history through art, handiworks, songs,

and stories. Now we make Target runs. So where do we make up for that lost cultural input? Or do we?

Women do have a larger presence in the workforce than ever before, but most of us also still assume the role of primary consumer for our family unit, which limits the time we can invest in ourselves, our passions, or other meaningful work outside of our job. So beyond our gainful employment and consumption, our voices and perspective are largely missing in society. Women have a contribution to make to society and the world. What is it? And how can we make it? At this point in history we generally feel too busy managing life to think about it that much. I believe that both women and society are suffering for it.

I would propose that in the last 30 years, women's social role has become far shallower. Aesthetics and consumption have been sold to us as our primary value and the primary way for us to achieve meaning and happiness; even though we never seem arrive, no matter how far we travel down those roads, we just keep chasing them.

In a study regarding the wellbeing of women in modern American society, Stevenson and Wolfers found that despite making significant gains towards equality, women's overall happiness has declined over the last two decades both absolutely and relative to the happiness of men. They speculate about why that might be, but are still unable to prove the reason for it. Most of their speculation focuses on the effects of gender equality and how a woman's need to balance her work and home life affects her happiness and overall sense of wellbeing. What they don't consider is the change in culture that took place alongside these advances for women and how they might contribute to women's happiness or lack thereof.

Interestingly, a follow-up study by Mauss et al. found that the pursuit of happiness actually has a paradoxical effect of making women unhappy. In other words, pursuing happiness itself makes us unhappy! Although this is probably largely due to our own perceptions and measurements of our own happiness, it is clear that *overvaluing* happiness tends to make women unhappy. Several years later, Ford et al. went one step further to prove that valuing happiness actually has causal links to depression, particularly in the U.S. This means that everything we are sold to make us content and happy are not likely to work and may even have the opposite effect.

What if, instead of chasing the ever-elusive feeling of “happiness”, we spent more of our time on things that are meaningful to us? What if, instead of trying to attain perfection, we became more interested in our interests and spent more time on the issues, pastimes, hobbies, and people that make us feel more like ourselves? What if the world doesn’t need us to be some form of socially-invented, feminine perfection? What if the world needs us to become more passionately *us*? Caring ever more deeply about whatever it is that we care about?

My story

In 2015, my family and I hit what would probably be considered our “stride”. We created a life for ourselves that we thought we wanted and that most people would consider charmed. We worked for ourselves from the modest home that we owned in southern California, had two healthy children, traveled to fun places for work, lived near supportive family, and spent several afternoons a week at the beach surfing, diving, playing, and hanging out with friends. We weren’t rich by American standards but we definitely weren’t poor.

The fact that I was unhappy and felt a constant, simmering anger baffled me. “I must be insanely selfish”, I thought to myself. “What more could I *possibly* want?” I was passionate about social justice and global issues and I always wished I could pursue those things, but I couldn’t figure out how that part of me fit into my family’s life as more than just a hobby. Who I was, or at least who I wanted to become, was something I did in all my spare time as a working mother of two, because everything I thought I needed to do as a good wife and mom was all-consuming. There wasn’t time for me to be myself, let alone a passionate version myself. I was too busy being what I thought I was supposed to be.

In the midst of it all, I became so disconnected from myself that 1) I didn’t know exactly what my passions were, let alone what it would look like to pursue them and 2) I didn’t think that pursuing my passions was valuable. The things I was deeply interested in didn’t seem important because they didn’t contribute to the what I was *supposed* to do, or even what I thought I *had* to do in order to be a good wife, mom, and woman. I didn’t see any value in my other interests because they weren’t part of who I thought I was supposed to be.

I want to make it clear that I am in no way devaluing women who are passionate full-time moms. The world needs every single one of us to completely embrace who we are meant to be. If your passion is full-time motherhood, or homemaking, or homeschooling – that is fantastic. Pursue those things with everything that you are. That simply wasn’t my passion because we are all passionate about different things. So, when I dismissed my interests as less noble than something else (full time motherhood), it backfired on me.

Part of the problem is that the pressure and guilt that women feel to facilitate other people’s success and happiness (whether it’s our boss, children, spouse, parents, etc.) that our

personal interests begin to feel less valuable than theirs. We are taught that it's selfish to prioritize our interests and passions if they don't benefit someone else. And if there's one thing a woman is not supposed to be, it's selfish. This is why even when women *do* pursue their interests and passions, we feel the need to do it in a way that doesn't inconvenience anyone. As if our fully developed personhood is a frivolous pursuit that needs to be fit in among the "truly important" things of life.

The truth is that many women are so busy making life happen that they fail to become the fullest, most passionate version of themselves.

For many women, juggling everything we need to juggle (especially everyone's needs, expectations and assumptions) is just overwhelming that we can't imagine adding anything to our plate, so we don't bother. We just don't have time, energy, or emotional resources to develop ourselves. We're too busy developing everyone else. We try to take breaks and do "something for ourselves" when we get exhausted, but we are often so empty that we don't even know what that "something for ourselves" would be. So, we go shopping for some "retail therapy". Or we get a massage. Or go out for cocktails. And as fun as those things are, they don't feed our true selves. Because developing ourselves requires more than an hour here or there. This is an easy trap to get sucked into, and then the next thing we know, five years have gone by and we have no idea who our true self is anymore, let alone how to nurture her.

Women get lost. Lost in the hamster wheel of trying to attain perfection and happiness. Lost in the scramble of facilitating everyone else's wellbeing. Even though we all know happiness doesn't come from living up to expectations or having-it-all. It doesn't come from

attaining perfection or doing everything a good employee/mom/wife/daughter/friend does. And it absolutely doesn't come from our physical appearance.

Happiness comes from being the fullest version of who we are meant to be and pouring ourselves into the passions that drive us – whatever they may be. Research proves it. A study by Ventegodt and his team found that people who report the highest levels of personal well-being are generally more focused on a philosophy of quality of life (Ventegodt, et al.). That is, happy people focus on achieving meaning, connections, and personal development rather than on feeling happy (Ventegodt, et al.).

According to research, another thing that contributes to greater overall happiness is volunteering and acts of altruism. In a study about the causal effects of altruism on holistic wellbeing, Stephen Post found that “Altruism results in deeper and more positive social integration, distraction from personal problems and the anxiety of self-preoccupation, enhanced meaning and purpose as related to well-being, a more active lifestyle that counters cultural pressures toward isolated passivity, and the presence of positive emotions such as kindness that displace harmful negative emotional states” (70).

These studies suggest that women in the North have gotten swept up in a falsehood about where our meaning, value and happiness lie. But if we focus on creating a more purposeful existence by devoting ourselves to making the world a better place – in whatever way we are most passionate about – we would also actually be happier. It's a win/win. It's time to wake up to this dynamic and try something different.

We are not meant to exist as consumers. We are meant to *live* as *people*. The difference is spending our life on things that are important to us and the world around us. We do this by

discovering and pushing deeper into the issues and interests that, for some reason, we just *can't not care about*. The stories and issues that burn hot and slow in our soul – the ones we can't get out of our heads after we see them or read them.

We all have those things, even if we haven't identified them yet. We are like matches – meant to burn. And we all have things for which we were meant to burn. We just need to find the spark that lights us up and then fan the flames of interest instead of flippantly dismissing them or putting them off. Fire wasn't meant for the back burner. It's meant for the front burner, where we do our cooking.

Imagine a world where women are passionately and actively engaged their interests (whatever they may be). A world where instead of being preoccupied by things we are told are important, we identified the issues that are worth spending ourselves on. The things that fill us up, even as we pour ourselves out. This isn't a groundbreaking idea. You know all these things already. But actually living this way would absolutely be groundbreaking. And it's what we will need to do if we want to change systems of injustice.

We will also need to redirect all the emotional, physical, mental, and financial resources that we currently spend on doing and being what we are "supposed" to be into creating a more equal and just world. As we'll talk about in Chapter 4, if women redirected all that energy and all those misdirected resources, we could absolutely transform the world. But it will only happen if we want it more than we want to embody and perpetuate our society's warped concept of Northern feminine perfection.

The pay-off is a more just world and a happier and more complete version of "you."
Worth it... don't you think?

To Sum It Up:

We are manipulated by our culture, tranquilized by consuming, exhausted from attempting perfection, anxious about fitting a mold, and so overwhelmingly busy spending our limited resources (time, money, energy) on things we are told are important that we have failed to recognize both our own oppression and the consequences it has on others.

The fact that women in the Global North are used for economic gain and manipulated by cultural norms and expectations to the point that we don't see our passions or interests as valuable is a form of exploitation. But the real tragedy is what happens in the Global South as a result of our hamster-wheel consumption, our quest for perfection over meaning, and our lack of active engagement in issues that matter.

Please understand that I'm not trying to compare the oppression of women in the North with those in the South - our mistreatment is extremely different and on very different scales. There is no possible comparison. I am simply observing the interaction and interdependence of women's subjugation around the world. While the average woman in the North *is* being used for economic gain and does experience legitimate difficulties like negative self-worth, shame and insecurity as a result, her plight cannot and must not be compared with women who lack her power and privilege. The amount of power, privilege, and oppression also varies wildly within the North, within countries, and within communities depending on each individual's class, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, etc. Women *without* the power to drive the economy – those in the Global South or underprivileged women in the Global North – are in far worse situations than those with it.

Take a minute to reflect and respond to the perspective presented by this chapter:

What is your gut reaction to this chapter?

Which idea or issue resonated most deeply with you?

Which ones were particularly challenging? Why?

How have these concepts played out in your own life?

Chapter 3: The Unintended Consequences of Our Lifestyle

As we've discussed, women in the Global North are stuck in a system that depends on our feelings of insufficiency to drive economic growth while minimizing our ability to pursue a meaningful existence. But our demand for products to help us become whatever-it-is-we-need-to-become is tragically fulfilled through systems of production that exploit vulnerable women in the Global South. This is the cyclical process by which women worldwide are used to drive global economic growth at one another's expense.

In this way, the flip side of our misguided search for fulfillment plays out in truly horrific ways in the Global South. In an effort to keep things cheap, increase demand, and pad their profit margins, businesses in the Global North ship jobs overseas, and take advantage of international loopholes. Due to long, complicated supply chains, these corporations claim little or no responsibility for the treatment of workers who make their products or the environmental impact of their manufacturing. This is particularly problematic for women in impoverished Southern countries who are more vulnerable to exploitation than their male counterparts. Driven to desperation by poverty and instability, women are often forced to take jobs with terrible conditions in order to feed their children and keep their family off the street.

The most scandalous part, however, is that many of these people are poor and desperate as a direct result of bad international policies largely driven by the interests of the Global North. This is because poverty, and "the underfulfillment of human rights in developing countries is not a homegrown problem, but one we greatly contribute to through the policies we pursue and the international order we impose" (Pogge 22). National governments in the Global South are frequently forced to cut social programs, and make their economy available to

global investors as conditions for receiving loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank. The IMF and the World Bank call these stipulations “Structural Adjustment Programs,” and it is “well-established that structural adjustment policies (SAPs) undertaken in developing countries to receive condition-based loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have exacerbated conditions of poverty and deprivation for large sections of the population” (Sadasivam 630). Research also proves that “it is women who, as workers, producers, consumers, wives, and mothers, are the shock absorbers of adjustment efforts at immense cost to their well-being” (Sadasivam 633).

For example, In Tanzania, the requirement to implement Structural Adjustment Programs in order to qualify for an IMF loan meant that the government had to slash funding for public health clinics. With no government subsidies, clinics had to start to charging a fee for their services, which decreased the number of pregnant women who were able to get prenatal care and increased maternal death and malnutrition rates (Mlay). Another study found that cutting federal funding for public schools is also sometimes included in Structural Adjustment Programs (Korayem). While this impacts all children, it especially effects girls who are more likely to be pulled out of school due to costs than their brothers (Korayem).

The thing is that these international bodies provide loans to national governments around the world, but they are largely run by people from the North who have their own best interests in mind. By requiring governments to cut spending on social programs and open their economy to the global market, the IMF and the World Bank make sure that multi-national corporations (often headquartered in the U.S.) are allowed into these countries to take advantage of new investment opportunities and new sources of cheap, desperate labor. They

say this is good for the country because when the economy grows, it supposedly benefits everyone. But the reality is that while some people have gotten very rich from this strategy (especially American corporate executives), the poor have simply gotten poorer as wealth and natural resources are extracted from their country and sent to the North.

And underprivileged women in the Global South have gotten even poorer because more of their work is unpaid and their small farms and businesses cannot compete in a globalized market. Under privileged women are also more deeply affected by mandatory cuts to social programs made to boost the economy. These cuts often end up taking away women's access to healthcare, which leads to a whole host of problems like the inability to manage illnesses, which can plunge them further into poverty, and having more kids than they can realistically care for because they no longer have access to affordable birth control. In addition, they may have limited education and vocational possibilities because of their gender (due to early marriage, stigma, pregnancy, or falling behind in school because they don't have access

There is a way to use economic productivity to decrease inequality, rather than increase it and empower people rather than exploit them. The Body Shop was one of the pioneers of ethical cosmetics, and they partner with 26 communities, in 21 countries around the world who now enjoy "higher incomes, more humane working conditions, and resources for development projects" ("Community Trade"; "Fair and Sustainable Development").

Kuapa Kokoo, a Ghanaian cocoa cooperative, has partnered with The Body Shop since 1996 and did so well that they launched their own Fairtrade chocolate company called Divine Chocolate ("Fair and Sustainable Development").

Eudafano Women's Cooperative in Namibia is The Body Shop's main supplier of marula oil ("Fair and Sustainable Development"). According to one of the Cooperative's managers, the partnership means she and her friends "can now support our families, help our children go to school and pay for medical care. We have gone from nothing to an international activity in a very short period of time. And we are very proud of it" ("Fair and Sustainable Development").

While no company is perfect, The Body Shop is making strides towards using their business to help, rather than hurt.

**If you are interested in other ethical and sustainable cosmetics, check out Afterglow Cosmetics and Odylique.*

menstrual hygiene products). So, when a massive multinational corporation swoops in and offers them an under-paying job with long hours and abysmal working conditions, they take it... what other option do they have?

This is why women make up the majority of the employees at multinational corporations, working long hours away from their children, often abused or assaulted by employers, and unable to do anything about it because their children need to eat. They are backed into a corner by a global system that sees them as cheap labor – a way to increase profit margins – rather than as people. Regardless of whether they are treated this way because of their social status, geographic location, gender, or the color of their skin, it is a malicious kind of oppression.

The harsh reality for us in the Global North is that these are the people who make all the *stuff* that our culture convinces us we need. Because we “need” seven pairs of athleisure leggings (it’s what the cool moms wear), we “need” them to be cheap. So, companies figure out how to meet that demand. Our consumption drives their oppression, so as we accumulate wealth and possessions, they fall further behind. This is the interconnected cycle of female exploitation that runs the world and one of the primary causes of global inequality.

This inequality is one of the greatest injustices of our time. And the gap between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, is growing (Reyes). This is true on a global scale and also on a national scale in many countries, including the United States (Belsie). Richard Wilkinson is an epidemiologist who has spent years researching the effects of social inequality and he has found that

A wide range of social problems are worse in societies with bigger income differences between rich and poor. These include physical and mental illness, violence, low math and literacy scores among young people, lower levels of trust and weaker community life, poorer child well-being, more drug abuse, lower social mobility and higher rates of imprisonment and teenage births (Wilkinson).

Our ever-increasing wealth and power is making us less happy and less healthy on both an individual and social level. As we discovered in the last chapter, altruism and meaningful work on things that matter to us would make us happier people. Now we see that it would also make us a healthier, happier society. And yet we continue to seek fulfillment and contentment in wealth and perfection. Still we run after having-it-all, rather than being passionately alive and completely ourselves. Because creating discontent in the wealthy is how corporations grow the economy. We demand more and more to fill the void we've been convinced we have or to become that which we imagine we should be. And it comes at the direct expense of those who already have too little.

And as we discussed earlier, as much as politicians and corporations want us to believe that there is enough for everyone to simultaneously get richer, that's not actually how it works. The current reality is that we, in the North, have too much and those in the South have too little and we need to share.

We Need to Share Economic Costs and Benefits

Currently, we are hoarding profit margins by not sharing the mark-ups all the way down the supply chain. Let's use an example we all have experience with: fast fashion. If you're not familiar with the term, "fast fashion" refers to the companies who take designer runway trends

and rapidly mass produce them for the general public so we can keep up on the latest looks without breaking the bank. Companies like H&M, Forever 21, Zara, Topshop, etc. are all major players in the \$3 trillion global industry of fast fashion.

These companies have based their success on keeping production costs extraordinarily low, largely by cutting corners on labor and environmental practices. They generally outsource their production “to countries such as Bangladesh, China and Cambodia, where wages are low, working conditions less regulated and factory disasters accepted as the cost of doing business” (Moore).

Think of it this way: everything costs someone, something. The clothes might be cheap for you, but they are made at a cost to someone or something.

It’s just that you aren’t the one absorbing that cost. And it’s a good bet that the corporation isn’t the one paying for it either. So, it’s costing someone other than you or the corporation - either in underpaid (or unpaid) work, time, quality of life, working conditions, ecological damage, tainted water, declining numbers of wildlife due to deforestation, etc. And

People Tree is a fair trade, sustainable fashion brand based in the UK that is changing their industry with radical transparency. Their feminine modern/classic clothes are certified Fairtrade and made according to the highest environmental standards. They are also empowering consumer to challenge harmful practices in the fashion industry (“People Tree”). People Tree actively encourages its customers to participate in Fashion Revolution, a movement started in response to the 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh which killed 1,134 people and injured 2,500 others. The factory produced garments for several well-known fast fashion companies who claimed no responsibility for the disaster.

Every year, Fashion Revolution marks the anniversary of that tragedy by having consumers take a photo of the tags on their garments and ask the brand “Who made my clothes?” It is a public way to pressure corporations to create more transparent supply chains. In 2016, over 1,000 brands and retailers responded to the question on social media, including 300 major brands, which represents a 448% growth in responses from the previous year (“2016 Impact”).

Using social media to directly engage corporations and hold them to higher standards is effective because shame and humiliation are bad for sales. Corporations tend to respond quickly to situations that could lead to negative press.

By setting new benchmarks for their industry, offering desirable, competitively priced products and encouraging their customers to hold other companies to higher standards, People Tree is a stellar example of how to change your piece of the world.

that *someone* is usually a woman of color in the Global South. She absorbs the real cost of your wardrobe and the company's high profit margin with her poor quality of life. Those of us who disproportionately benefit from this system (the individuals and the corporations) need to share both the costs and the benefits of the system with her. We must take on our fair share of the costs and give her a fair share the profits.

And while fashion is an easy example, this is also true of other industries, including agriculture, technology, home goods, cosmetics, lumber, oil, precious gems, minerals, etc. If you go back to my chocolate example in the first chapter, you'll see the same principals there. People other than myself and Nestle were paying the price for my cheap chocolate. By paying slightly more for my treat (\$4 instead of \$2), and buying from a company that is willing to sacrifice some of their profit margin for the well-being of people who produce their goods, we created a more equal and just system for procuring chocolate. In the process, the industry was forced to pivot to meet the new demand for ethical chocolate. This process, and its results, has positive repercussions in the lives of millions of people globally. All because people chose to support a more fair and equal supply chain.

We Need to Share Natural Resources and the Consequences of Climate Change

We also need to share the earth's natural resources. The earth is finite and we in the North are using far more than our share of ecological resources. Our inability to share these environmental resources (water, clean air, land, oceans, etc.) is directly and disproportionately harming poor communities, communities of color, and women around the world. For example, did you know that Americans are about 4.4% of the world's population (U.S. and World Population Clock), but produce about 16% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions (Boden et

al)? And that Americans emit more than double the global average of greenhouse gases per person (Mengpin et al)? Our unwillingness to curb our greenhouse gas emissions is causing sea-levels to rise and increasing the rates of natural disasters. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center found that due to climate change, people are 60% more likely to be displaced by natural disasters now than they were in 1970 (Yontani 8). In a particularly ominous example of how climate change is effecting vulnerable parts of the world, the small island nation of Tuvalu has already struck a deal with New Zealand “to accept its 11,600 citizens in the event that rising sea levels overtake the country” (McDaniel et al).

It is a fact that “developing countries have contributed the least to the emission of greenhouse gases but are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and have the least capacity to adapt to changes” (Schwarte 1). In 2010, Christoph Schwarte of the Legal Response Initiative published a report showing that “small island nations and other threatened countries have the right and likely the procedural means to pursue an inter-state case before the United Nations’ International Court of Justice” (Friedman). In other words, countries in the Global South that experience detrimental effects of climate change have grounds to sue the countries that disproportionately contributed to the problem. They haven’t taken action to do so yet (likely due to financial constraints), but we’ve caused so much damage that they absolutely could.

You may not know this, but women are also disproportionately affected by climate change (United Nations 2015 171). Since they are the ones largely responsible for subsistence farming, gathering water, and feeding their families, climate change is making women’s jobs

more and more difficult in the Global South (Mckinney and Fulkerson 288). Drought, floods, landslides, decreasing numbers of wildlife – these things all impact women more than men.

On top of that, women don't have comparable levels of political or social representation, so they can't even make their needs and struggles known to those in power. The way that climate change uniquely effects women literally *just* occurred to development organizations and world powers in the last 2-3 years because there weren't enough women in power to inform them of it.

In addition to carbon emissions and its effect on climate change, did you know

Women, people of color, indigenous people, religious minorities, and members of the LGBTQ community are often the victims of unjust social and political structures. One of the best ways to alleviate those injustices would be to increase the representation of those communities in political and global institutions.

In particular, increasing the number of women in policy making seems to have a positive effect on everyone – not only women. Studies have shown that women in political leadership are more likely to create stable governments, work across party lines, create lasting peace, push for government accountability, and prioritize health, education and other key development indicators ("Why Women in Politics"; Whitman and Gomez 1). In addition, McKinney and Fulkerson found that increasing women's representation in national governments resulted in decreased carbon emissions in those countries.

Voting in more representatives from vulnerable or marginalized communities is a critically important for interrupting systems of injustice. Over a century ago, John Stuart Mill rightly observed that "in the absence of its natural defenders, the interest of the omitted is always in danger of being overlooked; and when looked at, is seen with very different eyes from those of the persons whom it directly concerns" (66). The perspective of people from these communities would an invaluable contribution to our government and would likely to push us closer to justice and equality.

that we literally ship some of our garbage and toxic electronic waste to poor countries? The Basel Convention on hazardous waste makes it illegal for countries to do that, but since the U.S. refuses to ratify that agreement (we are the only country in the Global North that has refused to do so) it's still technically "legal" ("Parties to the Basel Convention"). The U.S. creates over 7 million tons of hazardous electronic waste per year, but only 15% of global e-waste is ever properly recycled (Heacock et al 550). Up to 80% of the world's e-waste ends up in China and

certain countries in Africa and the bulk of that waste is improperly handled and ineffectively recycled (ie. burned or dismantled by hand) (Heacock et al 551). When e-waste is inappropriately processed like that, it can release about 60 chemicals commonly found in complex electronics, “including lead, cadmium, chromium, mercury, copper, manganese, nickel, arsenic, zinc, iron, and aluminum – many of which are potentially, or known to be, hazardous” (Heacock et al 551). In addition to the ecological degradation from these toxic chemicals sitting in landfills, they also create a host of health concerns for the people in those regions – from cancer, to delayed development in children due to exposure to neurotoxins, and many others (Heacock et al 552).

As you can see, it’s not just production and manufacturing that negatively impacts the South. It is also our disposal of those products. When we throw “away” the stuff that we’ve become

Decreasing consumption and waste is becoming easier and more accessible as organized community efforts like BuyNothing become more and more popular.

These groups let neighbors share, lend, borrow, trade and give away their stuff. Instead of buying a crème brulee set that you will use a single time for your fancy party, borrow one instead! You can borrow tools, give away or get furniture, swap books, find kids gear... anything. If you haven't discovered your local BuyNothing check Facebook for your local chapter.

disillusioned and discontent with because the trends have to spin the wheels of production, it ends up in the backyards of the same people we exploited to create it in the first place. Every piece of the global economic cycle – from production to disposal – impacts those in the Global South, often in tragic ways.

Adding another layer of injustice to all of this is the racist nature of these systems. The tragic truth is that people of color bear the brunt of these inequalities – both globally and locally. The majority of people in the Global south are non-white and as we have established, they are disproportionately affected by systems of global injustice. However, we also see the

same dynamics play out in Northern countries where communities of color and/or indigenous people are disproportionately affected by social inequality and environmental hazards. Did you know that people of color in the U.S. are exposed to significantly higher levels of environmental pollution and toxins than white people (Bullard and Johnson)? And that people of color are more likely to live near waste facilities (Bullard and Johnson)? And have asthma due to environmental exposure to pollution (Massey)? And send their children to schools that are closer to waste facilities, which has been proven to lower school performance, regardless of race and income (Massey)? Study after study show that “Across the United States, poor and minority neighborhoods bear an unequal burden from hazardous facilities and waste sites”

People of color and other minorities (including LGBTQ people, those with disabilities, undocumented people, religious minorities, etc), suffer disproportionately from systems and structures of injustice, so organizations and movements started and run by those communities have a better understanding of the problems and are uniquely equipped to confront them. These organizations need people to amplify their message.

It's time for those of us with privilege to take the spotlight off ourselves and shine it on minority efforts and leaders. This does not mean telling people's stories for them, but rather, drawing attention to those people as they tell their own stories.

The best way to do this is to educate ourselves about the issues, listen to minority perspectives with the intent to understand, call out prejudice or ignorance in our own communities when we encounter it, and support organizations run by people of color and other minorities.

I recommend reading books about race relations (check the back for recommendations), follow leaders of color on social media just to listen, talk to your school or religious institution about having more minority speakers, teachers and contributors.

(Massey 5).

For these reasons (and many others), both historically and to this day, people of color often absorb the real costs of economic growth. That was literally the reason that black people were originally brought to the U.S. from Africa – enslaved so we could have cheaper products. Families from Mexico are left with no viable options after we decimated their agricultural industry with economic policies that benefited our economy at the expense of theirs (Holmes). They are forced to come here and absorb much of the costs of our

agricultural products with their lives, bodies, and general wellbeing and still live in fear of deportation (Holmes). This is also one of the reasons that we run pipelines through Native American land – it’s cheaper and easier to “export” non-monetary expenses (oil spills or leaks, effects on water, loss of land value) to a population that doesn’t have the social, political, or economic clout to prevent it or seek compensation (Bullard and Johnson). And the tragic reality is that these less empowered populations, that absorb the real cost of production, usually have brown or black skin regardless of whether they live “here” or “there”. Whiteness makes people less likely to pay the full price of their wealth and possessions. This is privilege. And this is one small part of systemic racism.

All this in the name of economic growth.¹

Please understand that these things are not the work of bad individuals. These are the results of systems, structures, and globalized norms. They are, simply put, “the way things are”. Now, that doesn’t mean we can’t change them (*we can* and *we will*), it is simply an acknowledgment that these injustices are built into the systems that run our nation and our world and will therefore require a systemic response. I’m also not blaming economic growth as a concept, nor am I arguing that production and consumption are inherently bad. The problem is *bad* production and *over* consumption.

My point is simply to help you understand the nature of the problem so that my suggested solutions make sense. Because regardless of how much it disgusts and horrifies us, this is how the world currently works.

¹ *I have vastly oversimplified all of the issues covered in this chapter simply due to lack of space. Most of these issues are the subject of entire books by themselves. If you are interested in learning more about these things, there is a list of recommended resources in the back of the book.*

The tragic fact is that our lifestyle fuels these systems and props up these unjust structures, and as the primary global consumer, we (women in the Global North), are particularly implicated in this situation. However, our disproportionate contribution to perpetuating the problem also means that we have an inordinate amount of power to unmake it. This means that instead of trying to stop these systems altogether, or opt out of contributing at all, what if we flipped these systems on their head and used them to lift people up, rather than oppress them? Production, consumption and economic growth can be leveraged to pull people out of poverty, grow national economies, and allocate resources in a healthy way. If we are going to impact the Global South with everything that we do, why not make it a positive one?

This is the only way to make effective change. These systems are too big to work around and too powerful to destroy altogether. We need to reroute their power to achieve a different end. And that is what we are going to do.

Stop, reflect, and find some hope before moving onto the next section.

How did reading about those systems of injustices make you feel? Be as honest and raw as possible. _____

List out people or organizations in the world that you know are making a positive difference – they could be people you know personally or public figures:

Take 3-5 minutes to reflect on the truth that since these systems were built and are perpetuated by people, that also means they can also be torn down and rebuilt by people (ie. us). Write down any thoughts or questions that come up in your mind.

Chapter 4: The Unrecognized Power of Our Role

Here's the thing: We could look at the fact that we are fueling global injustice as the most upsetting, and overwhelming situation in the world and give up. Or, we could flip it on its head and see the power of our position.

Beyoncé was more right than most of us realize when she said that girls run the world. Economically speaking, we literally do. Reports from around the world continue to find that women are the driving consumers of the global economy. For example, in 2013, The Nielsen Company reported that American women had anywhere from \$5 to \$15 Trillion in purchasing power ("US Women Control the Purse Strings"). According to Bridget Brennan, one of the leading experts on female consumers in the U.S. and author of *Why She Buys: The New Strategy for Reaching the World's Most Powerful Consumers*, "Women drive an estimated 70-80% of consumer spending with their purchasing power and influence 91% of all household purchases" (Brennan). Worldwide, the numbers are even more staggering. In 2010, Harvard Business Review estimated that women worldwide had \$29 Trillion in purchasing power and expected that number to grow to \$40 Trillion by 2018 (Silverstein and Sayre). That means that in 2010, women represented a growth market more than twice as large as India and China *combined* (Silverstein and Sayre).

Economically speaking, women have a tremendous amount of power over product development and marketing that we could leverage to steer economies and corporations in a more equitable and just direction. In *Influence*, her book about the power of female consumers, Maddy Dychtwald stated that "We're on the brink of a massive power shift, a grinding of the

gears of history into a new human condition...It's a world where women can, if they choose, seize the reins of economic control" (Quoted in Luscombe).

Even 10 years ago, Theresa Braine, the author of "Contribution Unrecognized", was already identifying both the "economic clout" of women and the fact that it is largely unrecognized by "the male-dominated corporate world [and] the women themselves" (Braine 30). In her article, Ms. Braine quotes the president of the Global Summit of Women, Irene Natividad as saying "as women continue to increase their wages, what a woman decides to buy will determine the future of any company in the world" (Braine 31). In order to harness this economic power, Braine argues that women must intentionally embrace a language of economic power, rather than economic need. When looking at women's "economic clout", Ms. Natividad observes that "it is enormous, enormous economic power that is yet to be accepted and seen and understood by women themselves," she says. "In the aggregate, it is unbelievable" (Braine 31). Essentially, this means that since our economic system is dependent on our participation and revolves around our demands, we also get to steer it.

Imagine it this way: if the global economy and global systems are an old stagecoach in the wild west, women are the horses that are pulling it. The driver has some semblance of control over the team – there are reins, harnesses, bits, and blinders – to help him steer and direct. But if those stallions really wanted to, they could pull that coach wherever they want. There are six of them! And the coach is connected to them with a complicated series of harnesses that cannot be cut lose without the coach coming to a screeching halt. So wherever the horses go, the coach goes too. Now, the driver may put up a fight and yank on those reins and bits like crazy trying to redirect them. But if those horses really wanted to, and all worked

together, there would be no stopping them. Sure, the driver is the driver and the horses might feel like they are at his mercy, but when push-comes-to-shove, they are the ones making that stagecoach move.

Those marketers and ad agencies might have thought that the low status of women made them an easy target for their ad campaigns a hundred years ago. But they underestimated how high we could rise. Decades ago, women didn't have the power or the clout to revolt effectively on a large scale. So they took it piece by faltering piece, and despite their many missteps along the way, women ended up where we are today – more empowered than we've ever been. While there is still plenty of work to be done (and there *is*) women in the Global North hold more positions of power, have earned more advanced degrees, and control more money than at any other point in history. Due to recent current events and political upheaval, many of us are also more motivated to make social change than we've ever been.

We are well-funded, educated, empowered and motivated. Ladies, it's our time to rise. What are we waiting for?

Reject Guilt

One of the most powerful reasons that so many of us have not taken action to interrupt these systems of injustice is because of the unproductive emotion of guilt. "Group guilt" – the kind that we might feel when we purchase a product we know was unethically made – is particularly unhelpful. "White guilt" is another example of this unhelpful emotion. This type of guilt typically "only motivates either avoidance or narrow attempts at restitution, mainly to assuage the advantaged group's own aversive state" (317). This is because there are only 3 ways that we can cope with group guilt: "minimize the harm that was done to the other group,

question the appropriateness of guilt, [or] engage in an argument about the cost of apology” (Thomas, Mavor and McGarty 317).

I can only speak for myself, but that is exactly what happens when I feel guilty about these things. I either justify the problem “It’s not that bad”, tell myself I have nothing to feel guilty about “it’s not my fault that this is the way it is”, or convince myself that it’s not possible to change the situation “It’s too bad, but what can I really do about it?”

In addition, the same study found that feelings of group guilt tend to intensify feelings of “us” vs. “them” (317). This is terrible for social action because when we see people as separate from ourselves, we tend to offer to help out of pity or because “it’s the right thing to do” rather than because we feel connected to them and want what’s best for them. And unless we help someone from a place of empathy (really, truly caring), we aren’t likely to help very effectively.

Guilt does not lead to meaningful change. So, reject guilt. Plus, the existence of these systems is truly not your fault, so you don’t need to feel guilty. Instead, I suggest a dual response: moral outrage and empowered action.

Unlike guilt, feeling a sense of moral outrage (anger over something that is legitimately, morally abhorrent... for example, the global exploitation of women) tends to result in effective action (Thomas, McGarty and Mavor 325). And when we take empowered action that we *know* will effectively address a morally reprehensible problem, our chances of making a difference are high.

So, while we don’t need to feel guilty, we do need to recognize and embrace the part we play in the system as well as the power of that role, for both good and for bad. When we

take responsibility for the unintended consequences of our lifestyle, it frees us up to help change the situation for those who are affected by them, rather than trying to make ourselves feel better about them.

For example, if my daughter accidentally knocks a glass of milk into her sister's lap, but refuses to admit she had anything to do with it, she's not going to help clean it up - she's going to try to distance herself from the situation while rationalizing why she has no responsibility for helping. She might think, "well, it *was* an accident" or "it's not *that* big of a deal" or "what's done is done!" But if she takes responsibility for the unintended consequences of her actions, she's going to say "Oh no! I didn't mean for that to happen... let me help you," while she mops it up, gets her sister some clean clothes and pours her a fresh glass of milk. Acknowledging our role in the problem frees us up to care so deeply about the people who are impacted by our actions that we legitimately seek their best interests.

As we wake up to these painful and discouraging truths, I exhort you to reject the disempowering, unproductive nature of guilt. It does nothing for us or for our sisters who are trapped with us in these cycles of female oppression. We should be outraged by this situation! Don't feel guilty – get mad! We are being *used* and it is having a direct and tragic effect on people around the world, particularly the marginalized and vulnerable.

Once we're sufficiently outraged by this unacceptable situation, let's be empowered to do something about it based on our economic and social power. It's time to use our position of power for good.

We are going to discuss the best ways to do that in the next section. Right after a brief discussion about the role of feminism in all of this.

Take a few minutes and let that sink in by answering these questions.

What are your thoughts and feelings about our economic power and position?

Describe any experiences you've had with feeling of guilt about global systems and problems.

What's the difference between feeling guilty about something and taking responsibility for it?

How does the fact that you're being used for your money and the effect that's having on women around the world, make you feel? _____

Chapter 5: The Role of Feminism

If your history of feminism is a little fuzzy, let me save you some time and sum it up: Feminism has had many ups and downs. While it has had significant triumphs, it has also seen many failures, and has historically been marred by a great deal of prejudice and exclusion. It has notoriously excluded black, Hispanic, indigenous, and Latino people, as well as Muslims, Christians (although that exclusion was often mutual), LGBTQ women, people with disabilities, etc. To say it straight - feminism has historically revolved around the concerns and experiences of majority, white, privileged women and has therefore really only benefitted them. The issues and hardships faced by women in other communities were, at best, pushed to the fringes and often dismissed altogether. This is precisely why several communities of color have created their own, safer versions of feminism, like the Womanist movement in the black community and the Mujerist movement in the Latino community.

Feminism is about equality for *everyone*. It's about raising up the oppressed until we all enjoy the same level of power and privilege. That is not possible if we are stepping on someone to get ahead or tearing someone down so they fall to our level. Feminism cannot be accomplished at the expense of anyone – not at the expense of people in the Global South, women of color, minority groups, or men. Feminism in its true form should be good for everyone. If it's not, then it's not real feminism.

The most recent “wave” of feminism (the fourth according to most sources), is finally recognizing this reality and is attempting to become more inclusive and intersectional. But it's difficult to break entirely from the darkness of its past, so latent racism and prejudice continues to rear its ugly head. The concerns and experiences of the most privileged groups still tend to

be the core rallying cries and standards of the movement, while the more pressing issues faced by marginalized and vulnerable women still get sidelined or ignored altogether. The very fact that “we” are trying to “include” or “take into account” the various ways that race, class, sexual orientation, ability, immigration status, religion, etc. affect women just goes to show that the movement is led by, and centers around, those of us without those experiences. If feminism is ever truly going to be “intersectional” and take into account the layers of injustice in people’s lives – for example, the way race and gender intersect in the lives women of color – people with those experiences need to be leading and centering the movement. White, privileged women have been at the forefront of it for far too long.

It’s not that there isn’t room for majority white women in this movement, it’s that we are already taking up more than our fair share of space and messaging. We need to intentionally take a step back so women of color and minorities can step forward and have their message be heard as loudly as ours has been. In addition, women of color and minority women have more to contribute to the intersectionality of this movement than we do, simply by merit of dealing with more intersectional issues in their lives than we do.

We must also come to grips with the fact that feminism should not only be an American, a Western, or a Northern ideal. If we claim to be feminists, we must act like feminism applies to *everyone*, even if they are different from us or live in an impoverished country. This requires seeing women around the world as part of our “we”. We must stop seeing women “over there” as separate and essentially different from ourselves. They are not. We are all women – full of dreams, aspirations, and relationships. And if we see those women as fully human, then there is no possible justification for why our feminist ideals need to come at the expense of someone

else. It's time to help them catch up to where we are and then all forge ahead across the finish line together.

This book is an attempt to turn the tables on that situation – to raise up the issues of the marginalized and address them first, even at a significant cost to ourselves. Because we've been raised up at their expense for far too long. Yes, our salvation is tied up with theirs, so we must all rise up together. But for that to happen, we must prioritize their needs, because they have further to rise than we do.

If you have an average level of privilege in the U.S., Canada or Europe, the issues of women in the Global South and underprivileged populations your own country must be considered more pressing than your own because they have further to go before they arrive at equality. For example, American feminism tells us that we have the right to wear whatever we want and whatever makes us feel good about ourselves. I would argue that is true – but not at the expense of whoever made those clothes. Even if new clothes make us feel powerful, or beautiful, that cannot be considered more important than the wellbeing of the people who made those clothes. New feminism should reject the idea that our freedoms must come at the expense of others. And if we are going to be truly inclusive, this needs to be true across racial, sexual, religious and gender boundaries in the North, but it also needs to cross national borders from North to South. What kind of feminists are we if our aspirations for equality do not apply to the women who make our clothes, or mine the mica that shimmers in our eyeshadow, or harvest the produce that we eat for dinner? Why are they less deserving of equality than we are? I want no part of a feminism that doesn't apply to them as much as it applies to me.

The other thing that I want to address is pity. I am not talking about the dire needs of women in the South to garner pity for them. Pity is guilt's sad best friend. It doesn't help anyone and it's honestly pretty condescending. We must stop pitying women in the Global South and start see them as collaborators in our collective fight for freedom and equality. Instead of looking out at them and thinking "how can I save them?!" We need to stop, listen, and then follow their leadership based on their experiences and ideas. They don't need us to save them. They need us to stop unintentionally oppressing them and instead, intentionally start supporting, learning from, and highlighting their message and work.

There is often an assumption that the Global North has the best way of doing things, but there are several global feminist movements that offer valuable insights and beautiful examples that can inform our push for global equality and equity. I agree with Chris Camarano when she wrote

I have come to feel... the need for internationalism in the women's movement, as in all revolutionary movements. Most especially, it is important for us to try to understand what lessons there are for us in the continuing struggles of women already living in revolutionary society. The changes in the quality of their lives, the recurring pitfalls, the necessity for constant offensive against material and attitudinal underdevelopment – all of these have meaning for us because they speak directly to our own oppression and to the possibilities of our throwing it off (48).

One of these examples is the World March for Women (WMW) (which should not be confused with the Women's March of 2017). The World March for Women is a global network of feminist groups fighting for equality both nationally and globally. In 2005, the Greek and Turkish country

chapters of the WMW decided to organize a joint gathering of their chapters in the city of Thessalonica, where historic battles between their countries had taken place. Their goal was to promote peace and solidarity between their countries. The WMW representative from Greece described the profound peacemaking that occurred at that meeting:

We closed the meeting with antinationalistic speeches and speeches on women's rights, highlighting the role that the solidarity of women can play in building bridges between our two peoples, who have been enemies for so long in a region traumatized by nationalist wars, population exchanges, and ethnic cleansing... Never before had the voices of Turkish and Greek women demonstrating together been heard in the streets of this great city [Thessalonica]. (Dufour, Giraud 1161)

By creating a sense of transnational solidarity, these women came to identify more closely with one another as women than they did with their own nationality. They were people first, and patriots second. Which, I would argue should always be the case. This social identity compelled them to pursue peace with other women across national borders, rather than perpetuate conflict, hate, and war.

The point here is that we must orient the goals of feminism around those who are most vulnerable and marginalized – letting their experiences, ideas, and issues drive the movement, regardless of where in the world their voices come from. Excluding marginalized communities, minorities, and impoverished women in the Global South from our movement just exposes the hypocrisy and self-serving nature of the feminist movement in the Global North up until this point.

Please don't get me wrong – I am a feminist and I acknowledge the good things that it has accomplished. But I also acknowledge the deep and hurtful wounds that it has inflicted over the years. And as a feminist, I feel compelled to improve the movement and help it become the best possible version of itself by removing myself (and women like me) from the center of it.

Let's go one step further and make this practical.

If we were to put the issues faced by women in the global south at the center of the feminist agenda, what would we be fighting for? How would that be different than the current feminist agenda in the Global North?

How can you draw attention to or join the efforts of minority women or women of color in your community?

Take a minute and go follow at least five women of color or minority women (from the LGBTQ community, a religious minority, someone with disabilities, etc.) on your preferred social media platform.

Bonus Challenge: This week, have a conversation with a friend about feminism as a global movement for equality of the sexes, just to see what she thinks about it.

PART II – Avenues of Change-Making

Chapter 6: Ground Rules

Before we get into these solutions, I want to take a minute to discuss some ground rules for social change making. These are boundaries to prevent you from getting overwhelmed, overcommitted, or burned out in your attempt to engage. It's critical to keep in mind that solutions are only really solutions if they actually solve the problem. These ground rules are designed to help you get there while avoiding common missteps. I hope they provide some perspective and keep your good intentions from overtaking your truly good ideas. Here we go...

Making change is not about grand gestures or superheroes

There is a persisting myth in Western culture about lone-wolf super heroes who come up with an ingenious idea and save the world. These narratives make us believe that we can only have an impact if we are famous or do something remarkable. Even stories about "regular" people who positively impact the world frequently glamorize the process of how they did it. People in those stories always seem to stumble across a way to raise a million dollars or start a nonprofit...like it's easy or effortless.

I have two fundamental problems with this myth. First, there is no single action or grand gesture that can change the world. When people ask me "what can I do?" I know that they want some kind of silver bullet that will change the world (ie. sign this petition and the children of Yemen will be safe), but that is unfortunately not how it works. Changing the world is like changing your health – eating one healthy meal or going on a single jog isn't going to do it. It takes consistency and commitment for an extended amount of time. Secondly, superheroes are

not really the ones who change the world. Yes, they make a big splash, but it is the rest of us who actually make the change happen. It is our follow-through on their ideas that change the face of history – our names just don't make the history books because compelling stories need heroes.

The fact that grand gestures and heroes make better stories and catchier headlines, is why we read about the same handful of people over and over and over again (Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Junior, etc). These are remarkable people who did remarkable things. But in reality, it is the millions who took their ideas to heart and lived them out day after day that made their ideas take flight. A movement, after all, is *people* moving, not one person moving. We need critical mass. We need you and your kids and all your friends and their kids. Martin Luther King Junior was not a movement. He was the face and the leader of a movement, but it was the thousands of people who followed him that gave the movement its power.

You might be one of those superheroes, and that's great. But most of us are not, and will never be, famous global leaders like Nelson Mandela. And believe it or not, that's the *best* news. Because the world only needs a few of those, but they need a *lot* of the rest of us. If we were all leaders of movements, we would literally be 6 billion people moving in 6 billion different directions. That's chaos. Those of us that are not global figures should embrace the quieter significance of our role. I will most likely not show up in the history books. But if I don't show up in real life, the movement will be weaker and its impact will be smaller because it will not only lose me, but everyone around me, and everyone around them, and so on and so forth with each of those people. Our presence and involvement has exponential implications. So we must show up, even though no one writes a book about us or asks us to be a keynote speaker.

The truth is that the majority of us are going to schlep our kids to school in the morning, show up to work, and make a difference where we can. We will contribute in small ways that may feel insignificant... and that is *awesome*. It is those types of contributions that actually change cultural systems of injustice. Most of our contributions will feel too small to make a difference on their own – but change cannot happen without them.

Your presence and its exponential implications are also crucial because what this movement needs more than anything else is *critical mass*. Critical mass is “a size, number, or amount large enough to produce a particular result” and it’s what a movement needs to become a movement (“Critical Mass”). We need numbers, not heroes. Compare the efficiency of starting a wildfire with a single large torch versus a thousand matches. The torch will start a single fire much faster, but it will take a long time to spread far and wide. It may even burn out without actually catching anything else on fire. A thousand matches spread across an acre of land would light a wildfire much more effectively, even though each individual fire starts out so small. The only way to change culture and social systems is by changing people and what they do. That’s it.

Can we count you in? Even if you’re never awarded a Nobel Prize (though you clearly deserve one)? Even if you have to keep showing up time after time? We need you. But we need the passionate, authentic version of you... not the “you” you think you need to be to make a difference.

We cannot do this on our own. We need *all* of us.

Community is Key

Taking social action, and changing ingrained behaviors is far easier if you don't try to do it on your own. Change of any kind is difficult, but changing a worldview or lifestyle without community it is extraordinarily challenging. Without a support system, you may start to feel like it's impossible (it's not!) or be tempted to give up (don't!).

This was one of the most difficult aspects of my own process. I had an extraordinarily hard time finding people who "got" me, which made me feel out of place and alone most of the time. When I couldn't find people in my immediate circle, I finally reached out to people on the internet and social media and found the people who would eventually become my tribe. They made me feel normal. They happily discussed the things I wanted to talk about. They challenged me, helped me see my mistakes, and they explained things that I didn't understand yet.

As you start to see things from a different perspective, having someone there to help you work through questions, obstacles, or confusion is extremely helpful. When you get angry or sad about something, or if you're a verbal processor like I am and just need someone to run stuff by, it's immensely helpful to have someone on the journey with you. In addition, when you get to the stage of changing behaviors, it's way easier to follow-through if you're not attempting to do it alone. It's the same reason that work-out programs always suggest going to the gym with a buddy – a sense of community provides accountability and encouragement that increases your chances of success.

You don't have to reinvent the wheel

Let me say this loud and clear: You do not have to come up with something new to make an impact. You do not need to start something groundbreaking or establish a nonprofit to make a difference. If you want to do that – you go for it. But it's not necessary for everyone.

There are *tons* of amazing people and organizations that you could get involved in. There are hundreds of good ideas and great organizations just waiting around for support. Organizations are literally dying and competing for your involvement. Most nonprofits, or cause-driven organizations, are led by visionaries, but their vision can only be achieved if other people catch it. This goes hand-in-hand with my previous point about leaders and movements. Just like leaders need people to buy into their idea to turn it into a movement, organizations need critical mass if they are going to go anywhere and do anything. They need you to passionately hop on board with their mission and provide substance to their concept and vision. We need more people who don't know what to do, *but actively support those who do*.

Consider this your official permission to reject the pressure to do something new if you want to make an impact.

The best way to impact global issues is probably indirectly

None of my tactics suggest that you travel internationally to help poor people. Because unless you have a super particular reason that you need to be there in person, the truth is that foreigners are often unhelpful and can sometimes even do more harm than good. Don't get me wrong – there are many wonderful organizations run by foreigners working in impoverished countries, doing incredible work, and we ought to support them. But the best ones employ locals and use local resources whenever possible. There may be a handful of foreigners without whom the organization could not be run or funded, but random people flying thousands of

miles to do manual labor or run kid's clubs is not actually necessary, nor does it actually solve any problems. Often, it doesn't help anyone except the foreigner themselves who are often changed by the experience. And while I'm so glad that people are positively impacted by those experiences (myself included), I maintain that our need for self-actualization must fall lower on the priority list than the needs of the underprivileged and impoverished. We need to draw the line somewhere on "poverty tourism" or "missions tourism".

Now, if you have a specialized area of expertise, or a highly-trained skill, there may be a use for you internationally. The world particularly needs technically skilled people (engineers, medical professionals, agricultural scientists) to donate their time and expertise. Entrepreneurs are also particularly situated to help in the Global South by starting enterprises that provide gainful employment and jumpstart economies in healthy ways.

The rest of us can often do the most good by trying to interrupt the systems that keep people impoverished and/or by contributing to local issues, which often has ripple effects around the world, even if we don't ever see them (*see Chapter 7*). I'm not saying we can *never* go, just that if we actually want to make a difference, we need to be more strategic and intentional with who we send and why we go. If you want to travel – go travel. Just don't claim it's to help someone when you may be more helpful from home. That's like going to visit a friend who just had a baby in order to "help" them, and then showing up and painting a mural on their bedroom wall. Is it nice? Sure. Is it really what they need? Probably not. It would be more helpful of you to organize a meal train to make sure people bring them food for the first week that they are home. It's not as much fun, but it is a hell of a lot more helpful.

This is disappointing to a lot of Americans, and I understand the letdown. I spent 15 years hoping and praying that I could move overseas to help people with my own two hands. I wanted to get *in it* – learn a new language, live in a new culture, bring something new and necessary to people who were impoverished or marginalized, and make a difference on the ground. I even went to school for it and got a Master’s degree in *International Community Development*. My family and I were willing to go wherever we could do the most good. But the more I learned, the more I realized that, for right now at least, we could do the greatest possible good by staying right where we are – that the best way I could help vulnerable people was indirectly, rather than by being there in person.

See, these countries don’t need people... they already *have* people. And they definitely don’t need a “solution” that makes them dependent on the presence of a foreigner. What they need is resources, opportunities, and a new global system that doesn’t benefit from and depend on their poverty. Impoverished people need us to understand how these structures work so we can tear them down and build them back better. Oppressed people need us to do everything in our power to interrupt the cycle of oppression that keeps them impoverished and exploited.

I’m sorry if that difficult to hear. But please don’t let the fact that we won’t get to travel, or have a good story to tell, or get to feel like we did something heroic (whether or not it was) prevent us from doing the most good we possibly can.

You don’t have to do, know, or care about everything

There is this thing called “compassion fatigue”. Even if you haven’t heard the term, I’m sure you’ve felt it. We are so inundated with information and images of social problems, global

crises, tragedies, and injustices that after a while it stops making an impact because we stop caring so much. This is because we physically and psychologically cannot care about everything. It's not possible. Our psyche can only handle so much before it starts protecting us by shutting off our empathy and interest. So, let me make this clear – you don't need to do, know, or care about everything.

You just need to find your niche and do as much as you can, where you can, on whatever issue(s) you care about most. You can't and don't need to be passionate about every conflict zone, every social justice issue, every ecological crisis... You don't even need to pay attention to all the issues, because that's also not possible. If you tried to, you would implode in a mess of burnout (believe me, I learned this lesson the hard way).

However, while you don't need to care about everything, you *do* need to pay attention to the intersections of issues. As we talked about in the section on feminism, no issue is an island. So you do need to educate yourself about the way that other issues impact the one you are passionate about (for example, if you are passionate about education, you need to know how disability, race, and poverty interact with education). But you do not, and cannot, care about every single thing in its entirety.

Beyond burn-out and impossibility, trying to care about too many things is also ineffective. Watering down your attention, passion, focus and resources is not productive. If you gave \$5 and 5 minutes to a different issue every day, you would end up making minimal impact. But if you focused that effort on the same issue every day, it starts to add up. I am convinced that if we were all actively engaged with the issue that we feel deeply about the world could be taken care of.

It's like a puzzle...no single piece can make the whole puzzle by itself, but without every single piece, the puzzle will never be complete. Abolitionists – we need you. Environmentalists – we need you. Animal rights activists – we need you. We need people fired up and actively working on education, racial reconciliation, peacemaking, gender equality, affordable housing, indigenous rights, and mental health. We need artists, modern-day mystics, musicians, health scientists, politicians, and builders. We need everyone to actively do their thing.

You can only do *you*, so you are only responsible for what *you* feel compelled to work on. And we have to trust that the rest of us are going to do our thing (while also inviting and reminding us to do our thing... *see the Chapter 8*). And if we all burn brightly for the issue we care about, the fire of love and responsibility for one another will spread around the world like a wildfire.

Bottom line: once you have your niche, feel empowered to do *something* and stop feeling guilty about *everything*. If you don't know what your thing is yet, or what you're passionate about, Part III will help you start figuring it out.

Take a minute to process...

Which of those ground rules resonated with you the most? Why?

Which one was most encouraging or freeing?

Did any of them surprise you? Why?

Chapter 7: Lifestyle change

I hope that I have sufficiently motivated you without totally overwhelming and depressing you. Because now that we understand the nature of these problems, we get down to the active, fun, and inspiring part of figuring out what we can actually do about these things. To reiterate a very important point, the goal of everything I suggest is to interrupt cycles and systems of oppression. That means directing most of our efforts at addressing the root causes of these problems rather than at the symptoms and results of the problems. That isn't to say that addressing injustices directly (for example, feeding the hungry, building houses, etc.) isn't worthwhile. It absolutely is, and some of our work should absolutely be devoted to that. However, as we've seen in the last few chapters, putting our hands on the worst injustices of our time can be difficult and even impossible because of the global and systemic nature of them.

That's why I've focused on three approaches to interrupting systemic injustices that I believe will be most effective if implemented simultaneously and on scale: lifestyle change, social influence, and advocacy/activism.

Let's consider a metaphor – if someone was driving around Los Angeles with a wrecking ball, knocking down buildings and causing mass destruction, we would absolutely need to pull people out of the rubble as quickly as possible in order to save them. But we would also need to stop the wrecking ball and the person controlling it. Otherwise, we'll be pulling people out of the rubble forever, when our real goal is for no one to be buried in rubble in the first place. As we've discovered, the tragic twist is that we're the ones driving the wrecking ball, but only because the guy who sold it to us convinced us that it was a regular car and we never noticed

the destruction we were leaving in our wake. So, the first step towards our goal is to get up and walk away from the wrecking ball (lifestyle change). The second step is to dig people out of the rubble (also lifestyle change) while yelling at our friends to get off of their own wrecking balls and help us (social influence). And finally, we need to call attention to the destruction caused by deceptively selling people wrecking balls, and try to get those businesses to clean up their act or have the government outlaw that practice (advocacy and activism).

As you can see, none of the approaches to that destructive situation would be enough to address all the problems on its own. You can't just get off your wrecking ball, or just pull people from the rubble, or only try to get the wrecking ball company to change its practices. You need all of them. Each tactic is equally important and they need to be done simultaneously. That doesn't mean that *you* have to do them all simultaneously, it just means that effective change will require the champions of these issues to engage on all three fronts, usually in multiple ways.

You'll also notice that these tactics overlap in a lot of ways. That's because nothing about creating social change is neat and tidy. The line between lifestyle change and social influence is blurry, as is the one between social influence and advocacy. Change-making is opportunistic in the sense that you do what you can do, when and where you can. So, while I give you categories of tactics here, some flexibility is required as we dive in.

Why start with lifestyle change?

There are a few reasons to start here. First, change must always (*always*) start with ourselves. Otherwise it's inauthentic – if you aren't passionate enough about the issues to let them change you, you're probably not passionate enough to speak into them. Second, you

cannot ask others to do anything that you are unwilling to do yourself. Third, all social change results from behavioral changes – doing something different – and changing behavior is hard! It's easier and more realistic to start on an individual level, rather than a systemic one. All fires start with a spark, which lights a match, which ignites a fire, which eventually turns into a blazing bonfire of change... and that is what we are aiming for. But you can't start there – you have to start with the spark.

When it comes to “lifestyle change”, what we are essentially talking about is the way we spend our time, energy, and resources. If, as we've discussed, women are unintentionally driving systems of global injustice by the way that we are (and are not) living our lives, then changing the way we live will redirect the systems (remember the stagecoach metaphor from Chapter 4).

There are some who argue that lifestyle change on an individual level makes no difference on systemic issues. Environmentalist Alden Wicker recently became so overwhelmed by the scope of the problems (specifically the effects of globalization, bad production, waste policies, and overconsumption) that he wrote an article for Quartz Magazine laying out why our individual actions don't matter in the grand scheme of things. When his friends asked where they should recycle old clothes, he went so far as to say that, “It doesn't matter where you take them: It will always end up in the exact same overloaded waste stream, which may or may not eventually dump it in Haiti... The relentless trend cycle of fast fashion... is flooding the secondhand market with a glut of clothes that Americans don't want at any price” (Wicker). He goes on to say that instead of buying greener, we should just donate our money to

environmental groups lobbying for regulatory change (a tactic that would fall under my advocacy/activism category).

While he's unfortunately right about the secondhand clothes, the answer is not to keep feeding the fast fashion machine while donating to environmental lobbyists. We need to stop feeding the machine, get our friends to stop feeding it, *and* donate to environmental advocates fighting for better, more effective, regulation. It's the combination of the three that will make a difference. This is not an either/or situation – it's a both/and sort of thing. If we advocate for one type of world with protest signs, petitions, and political lobbying, while supporting the other kind of world with our dollars, we will be sending self-defeating mixed signals. And the money is always going to win. We must present a united front.

That's why, in our capitalist society, unless advocacy efforts are coupled with a shift in consumer demand, they are not going to be very effective. This is especially true under the new Trump administration, which has promised to lift regulations and give more power to the free market. In that case, the market rules. And remember: *we are the market*. It goes where we go – so let's drive it towards justice.

More of what matters, less of what doesn't

How exactly do we do this? Intentionally. The first step is intentionality in the way we spend our time, money, and resources.

There are two commonly suggested ways to send a message with our lifestyle: boycotting and "buycotting." The idea is to send a message with what we don't buy, and then reinforce that message with what we *do* buy. The argument is that by supporting companies that are ecologically sustainable and ethically sourced, we can use our purchases to decrease

global inequality and injustice rather than contribute to it. Proponents of this tactic argue that when you purchase something that is ethically or sustainably sourced, you support good trade practices, provide fair wages to workers, and help drive demand for sustainable production practices. If we demand ethically-made shoes, they say, the world's business will produce more ethically-made shoes. And they're right - when we need something, that's exactly how we should go about getting it. But consuming better by "boycotting" is only half the solution.

Even more than that, I believe that the most important and impactful thing we can possibly do to change the world is buy less and discard less. I realize that recommendation is radically anticlimactic. It's not even something to *do!* It's something to *not do!* Which probably feels deeply unsatisfying. But since you read the first couple chapters, you know that it's the deadly combination of *bad* consumption and *over* consumption that is suffocating women in the North and oppressing women in the South. So, the answer isn't simply "buy better", it's also "buy less".

Think about it. We know that we are too consumeristic and have too much and that it's negatively affecting us and people around the world. But we are so wrapped up in our consumer culture that we even try to tell ourselves that the best way to help people who have too little is for us to *consume more...*just, better. Consuming less doesn't seem to have occurred to us. But the problem is both bad consumption and *over* consumption. If we are going to address both problems, we need to consume *better*, and we need to consume less.

If you are thinking that you don't buy very much that you don't need, you may need to look again. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Americans spend nearly \$2.3 trillion on things that aren't "needs," such as jewelry and eating out at restaurants (Whitehouse). And

since 2009, categories of unnecessary expenditures were growing at a faster rate (3.3%) than our spending on necessary items (2%) (Whitehouse). You're probably spending more time and money than you think on things that aren't actually important or fulfilling for you.

This is where minimalism comes in. And before you roll your eyes and conjure up visions of living with a single fork and a mattress on the floor, hear me out. Minimalism, at its core, is about having more of what matters and less of what doesn't. According to Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus, authors of *The Minimalists*, "Minimalism is a lifestyle that helps

Nate and Jenna live on Maui with their two children. The island is expensive, so until their children were 3 and 5 years old, they lived in a one bedroom, one bath, 420 square foot space.

During this time, they necessarily embraced minimalism. They recently purchased a new, more spacious home, but they continued with their minimalistic lifestyle because it gives them financial freedom and "time for the things that matter to us" (Jenna). They have money to spend on people or causes that are important to them – like flying out a single mom and her two kids for a visit. They also have more time to spend on the things that bring them joy – like taking family adventures or helping people in their community.

During the process of paring down, Jenna learned that "giving away money is way more fulfilling than spending it on ourselves", so whenever she feels "cranky", she thinks of someone she could give a gift to (usually flowers or coffee) and it cheers her right up.

The freedom they get from minimalism – both time and money – is what makes their life work (Strubhar).

people question which things add value to their lives. By clearing the clutter from life's path, we can all make room for the most important aspects of life: health, relationships, passion, growth, and contribution" (Fields Millburn and Nicodemus). They go on to say that while minimalism looks totally different for everyone depending on what's important to them and what they want from life, minimalism will always lead to the same destination: "a life with more time, more

money, and more freedom to live a more meaningful life" (Fields Millburn and Nicodemus). By questioning the value of everything we include in our lives, we can fill it with only the things

that bring us meaning and joy. I've included some resources about this type of minimalism in the back of the book, and I'd strongly encourage you to take a look.

The idea here is not deprivation. The goal is to have *enough* so that others can also have *enough*. I'm not preaching austerity, or extreme minimalism, and I don't want you to have too little... I just don't want you to have too much. Because "too much" usually means that someone else has "too little." At first, our spending habits may be difficult to change, because when we have too much and someone makes us share, it can sometimes feel like we're being deprived. But the truth is that it's making the entire system fairer and more equitable. As a perk, once you've adjusted and made space in your life for the things that matter by clearing out the things that don't, science suggests that you'll be happier and less stressed out (Arnold et al.).

By scaling down our consumption, we decrease our production of waste, discontinue our support of exploitive manufacturing practices, and increase our available time, energy, and resources. This, in turn, forces global corporations to align with the values that we are demanding they have, which improves the lives of their workers, decreases ecological injustice and decreases global inequity. In other words, taking control of our values, time, and money, interrupts systems of exploitation and oppression both "here" and "there" and frees us up to direct all of those reclaimed resources towards building a better and more equitable social and economic reality.

That's why I would argue that consuming less is the best, and the perhaps only way to effectively address our own oppression. If we shop, buy, and maintain less, we would not only positively affect people in the Global South and stop contributing to their poverty – we would

also have more time and money to devote to things that are really important to us, including giving to charities that are directly addressing the problems we care about. Minimalism contributes to the issues we care about in multiple ways, on multiple levels, while also helping ourselves. And all those things together can disrupt, reshape, and redirect global systems. This is what I mean when I say women’s salvation is interconnected.

Conscious Consumerism

Obviously, there are times that we must consume, and we can use those opportunities to send a message, demand better production practices, and support efforts to create those improved systems. There are already many excellent guides for conscious consumerism, several of which I’ve included in the resource section. But as an introduction to the concept, check out the simple graphic that I adapted with permission from Elizabeth Stilwell to help you make a positive impact as a consumer (see box).

The majority of our purchases would probably be derailed by the first question, but we obviously also have some legitimate needs – stuff we really do need to buy. And we can



use those moments of valid consumption to build up women around the world, instead of pushing them down. Since you haven't been buying all that cheap stuff, you have more money to spend on things that positively impact people, the earth, and economic systems and that will last a long time! When you purchase items that are ethically made, you insist on paying people a fair wage for their products and you turn shopping into a practice in equality. You can start to see the worker who made whatever-it-is-you're-buying as a peer – you're both just people, working hard for your money, getting paid what you're worth. *That* is the world I want to live in. Even if it means I only buy 3 tops a year instead of 10. How about you?

I also want to address one “necessary” product that creates an inordinate amount of waste and is terribly toxic to produce: our feminine hygiene products. Tampons and pads are one of the top polluters – the average woman will use and dispose 16,000 tampons in her lifetime and about twice as many sanitary pads – and they are usually filled with toxins (Clawson 152). The manufacturing process for tampons and pads is also concerning because it releases a horrifically toxic chemical called dioxin, which is categorized as a carcinogen by the EPA. (Clawson 152). After dioxins are released into the air through manufacturing, they are absorbed most readily into animal tissues and enter our bodies when we consume animal products. According to the EPA, most people in the general population have a high enough level of dioxin in their body to be concerning (“Summary of the Dioxin Reassessment Science”). The EPA is actually perplexed as to why our rates of disease aren't higher, considering how much dioxin is present in our system, which can't be a good sign (“Summary of the Dioxin Reassessment Science”). And then, once we use the tampons (and absorb all the leftover

chlorine into our bodies), we discard them filled with raw human blood, creating more toxic waste.

Thankfully, as with many products these days, there are other options! My favorite is Thinx period underwear, which you may have heard of or at least seen their ads on Facebook. Their products are awesome and revolutionary, and for many women they essentially make tampons and pads obsolete (“Period Panties for Modern Women”). Menstrual cups are another great alternative to traditional products. They sound weird, but I swear they are amazing once you get used to them. Plus, you’ll stop absorbing so many chemicals into your body every month - it’s a win/win.

By changing this one piece of your lifestyle, you’ll decrease your consumption, send a message that you do not support disposable tampons or the toxic process by which they are produced, and dramatically cut down waste over your lifetime. If widely embraced, these changes would decrease the overall production of tampons and pads, which, if combined with pressure and regulation, could change the industry as a whole. What if demand for conventional tampons and pads fell so dramatically that they became a thing of the past (like film!) because everyone started using period panties?! It may not affect our lives in the short-term, but it will affect vulnerable and marginalized people who are deeply affected by our waste practices, pollution, and the resulting climate change. In other words, it will help disrupt global systems of injustice.

By reimagining which products are really “necessary”, we can reconsider how much consumption, waste, and pollution is really “unavoidable.” As you can see, these things are bigger than us and our individual choices, but they require our participation.

The power of our consumer choices is evident in the market for organic produce, the demand for which has growing by double digits for multiple years running and created massive shifts in the agricultural industry (“Organic Market Overview”). In 2015, organic purchases rose 11% to a new record total of \$43.3 billion (*Organic Industry Survey 2016*). By choosing organic produce over conventionally grown fruits and vegetables, people sent a clear message to agricultural producers that they reject the use of toxic chemicals on their food. Whether they do so out of concern for themselves, the workers who pick the produce, the animals and insects that pollinate and fertilize our food, or to protect water supplies and natural resources, their message was heard loud and clear by the corporations and farms that grow our food. The entire industry is now trying to adjust to meet the demand. According to the Organic Trade Association,

2015 was a year of significant growth for the industry despite the continued struggle to meet the seemingly unquenchable consumer demand for organic...In response, the organic industry came together in creative and proactive ways to address the supply challenge, to improve and develop infrastructure, and to advocate for policy to advance the sector. (*Organic Industry Survey 2016*)

Since we’ve been unable to push through legislation banning the use of chemicals on our produce, consumer demand is driving these changes in the industry. Since the Trump administration has promised to loosen regulation even further, we are going to increasingly depend on consumers to set the course for industry.

We saw the same thing with the chocolate industry in the first chapter. Corporate lobbyists for companies like Nestle hold so much power that advocates haven’t been able to

push through legislation that regulates unethical supply chains for chocolate, so people (like Mike and Ciara, our friends in Maui) are steering the industry through other means, namely: by manipulating market demand. And eventually, if we keep it up, it will change. It is just going to take a while, because changing the world takes an infuriatingly long time.

And it needs more people. It needs you to decide to engage. Recognize the life of “more” and call it out in your own life. Push back on the idea that you *need* another cheap, trendy piece of clothing. That you *need* the newest tech gadget. That your kid *needs* that toy. You don’t need it and the reason you think you do is a lie. That purchase is only going to perpetuate a cycle of injustice that you don’t want anything to do with. And it’s not going to make you happy! Remember the research! The thing that is going to make you feel fulfilled is investing your personal and financial resources in the things that matter deeply to you.

Use your Extra Time and Money on What Matters

Let’s assume that we’ve embraced “enough.” We cut back our consuming and cleared everything out of our lives that doesn’t really matter. That means we have all sorts of new found time and resources. What do we do with it?

When it comes to money, a study by Dunn, Aknin, and Norton found that the most satisfying thing to do with it is give it away. Their research proved that “spending money on others promotes happiness more than spending money on oneself” (Dunn, Aknin and Norton 1688). And it doesn’t even have to be a lot of money! Their results “suggest that very minor alterations in spending allocations— as little as \$5 in [the] final study—may be sufficient to produce nontrivial gains in happiness on a given day” (Dunn, Aknin and Norton 1688). Let me

break this down: if you spend less time shopping for yourself and give more money away, you'll be happier. Science says so.

In addition, if you give some of that money towards causes that you're passionate about, you can turn your indirect social action (scaling back your spending and consuming) into direct action by funding the work of an organization doing great work on the ground. In this way, you can care for people affected by injustice around the world, even though you can't be there in person.

With your newly found time and money, I would also urge you to invest in growing and cultivating community and relationships. In the previous chapter, I mentioned the pragmatic value of community when trying to create change. But community is also valuable in and of itself. In fact, I believe that the value of being surrounded by deep, meaningful relationships cannot be overstated. The simple action of pursuing and prioritizing relationships over stuff has a profound impact on our lives and helps reorient us to things that matter. And before we can change our lives to make the world a more just place, we must align our own lives to the things that really matter: People, relationships, and passions. Not things.

If you quit spending your time and money on stuff that doesn't really matter, you'll also have more time to do the things that make you feel alive. It doesn't matter what it is – caring for elderly, saving animals, picking up trash, writing, coding, volunteering in schools, baking (donating what you bake to a local homeless shelter or food bank), making art - the possibilities are literally endless. Spending your time doing things that matter to you is going to disrupt the system of women's oppression because you will no longer be oppressed. And when one of us is

free, it provides the possibility of freeing others as long as we are intentional about making that happen.

Getting involved in local issues or causes that light our soul on fire also grows our capacity for empathy. Deeply immersing ourselves in something and learning its nuances and complexities, helps us understand that other situations might be just as complex and nuanced. This increases our ability to see things from another perspective. And because everything is interconnected, following our interests and passions can have ripple effects beyond what we will ever know. It will change us, but it will also change our environment and the people around us. Fire does that.

All you need to do is identify your interest, or find the thing that makes you feel alive, or the issue that you find most compelling, and do whatever it is that *you* can do about it. It will look different for all of us because we all have different skills, interests, talents, resources, connections, and availability. Now, I realize this is easier said than done and if you don't know what issues you care about, or what you can do about it, Part III will help you discover those things.

The world needs women who are on fire. Women who are fully alive, awake and engaged. Are you? When was the last time you were? Simply by existing, women who are fulfilled and passionate interrupt systems that exploit other women worldwide because they reject their own economic exploitation which frees them up to stop supporting injustice and start supporting issues that matter to them. They also tend to have a positive effect on everyone around them. Which is awesome, because we're going to need them too.

Let's pause and process for a bit...

What are your initial thoughts about the idea of lifestyle change? How does it sit with you? Why do you think you're responding to it that way?

What are some subtle ways that you've gotten caught up in consumerism?

How do you feel about the concept of minimalism – having more of what matters, less of what doesn't?

What are a few things you would do with a little bit of extra time and money if you had them?

Chapter 8: Social influence

Let's assume that we started the process of changing our lifestyle (and it *is* a process, it's not work we ever finish), and it provided the spark we needed to wake us up and make us feel purposefully alive. We are now matches, ignited by the thing(s) we care about most.

Social influence is how we become productive matches. Because the purpose of a match is to spread the fire around. If a match just burns on its own and doesn't transfer the fire, what's the point of it? A single match isn't enough to give off a meaningful amount of heat nor a useful amount of light. The value of a match is that it can be used to multiply fire or light bigger ones. And that's the point here – to create a whole bonfire of social change agents, tackling the issues they care about, and helping others do the same. Right now, too many of us are matches who have gotten distracted and lost sight of the fact that our purpose is to find a spark, burst into flame, and ignite those around us.

We do this by taking advantage of all our available platforms – both vertically and horizontally – to get people actively engaged in whatever issue we're fighting for. What I mean by "vertically" and "horizontally" is that we need to use our networks to spread our fire both to our peers and to people with greater or lesser power and influence than we have.

Our horizontal networks are people who share a similar level of power as we do, such as our friends, co-workers of a similar professional level, classmates, etc. Our vertical networks are the connections we have to people in our community with various levels of power. It includes our connections to people in power – our boss, pastor, teacher, that one rich friend or family member, that person we know with a relatively significant social media following, etc. It also

includes those with less power than ourselves – children, students, young people, disenfranchised or marginalized people, employees, etc.

Consider the metaphor of building an actual campfire. If we want to successfully build a fire, we need all different types of material to burn – paper (or some kind of quick-lighting material), small twigs for kindling, small logs to help maintain the fire and spread it to the medium logs, and the big fat logs that produce the most heat and burn the longest.

If we are building a fire of change regarding the issue we care about, those different materials represent the various change tactics and sources of influence that we need to build it effectively. If we only use a single approach or get one type of influence, it's like trying to keep a fire going with only small logs – it's going to be hard to light and it's not going to burn very hot or very long. We also need kindling and big logs.

This is why we need a variety of tactics and a variety of influencers. We need both people in high places and people in low places to get on board and engage with whatever issue we are trying to get them on board with. Because even if we get the most important person in the world to buy into our idea, it makes no difference if they don't get all the other seemingly-insignificant people to follow them. Those “unimportant” people are really freakin' important! And on the flip-side, if all of us regular people never get the attention of those in power, the fire might fizzle out after a short time. We need to cast our net wide.

Social influence can take a million different forms. Most of us probably think of a celebrity using their “social influence” on Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook to build awareness about an issue. But building awareness via social media is just one way to do this, and it tends to be hit-or-miss in its effectiveness.

The best way to activate social influence is always in person, by example, and in community.

In 2006, my husband and I got married and moved to Oregon. Shortly after we arrived, we got involved in a new church that had an insurgent, upstart-ish quality that we liked. Kim, one of the young women who worked at the church (one of three full-time employees) decided to host a four-week class about “human rights and social justice” for anyone who was interested. It wasn’t part of her job, it was just something she was interested in. The concepts of “social justice” and “human rights” were just hitting mainstream culture around that time, so I was intrigued but extremely ignorant. My husband and I arrived for the first night of class and joined about six other people lounging in her living room drinking wine. Kim handed out notebooks of information about injustices and human rights violations that I had no idea existed, like sex trafficking, forced labor, gender-based violence, and child marriage. It was all new to me, and it changed my life forever.

It lit a fire in my soul and started me on a journey that I could have never predicted. Since then, I’ve tried to tell as many people as I can about these things with the hope of getting them involved somehow. I’ve tried just about every avenue of social influence – from starting an advocacy blog for moms, serving fair trade chocolate cupcakes at my kid’s birthday parties, and telling everyone about the Rugmark certified slave-free rug I got on Overstock.com, to self-publishing a children’s book to help parents talk about hard things with their little kids, writing activist Facebook posts, highlighting female human rights leaders and leaders of color, attending the women’s march, and speaking up when someone says something racist/sexist/classist, etc. I feel an unquenchable fire to make social change, which is how I

ended up back in graduate school at thirty-two, with two little kids – unable to escape the burning in my soul to do something in this field.

And none of that would have happened if Kim hadn't offered to teach a class about something she was passionate about. It wasn't formal, she didn't prepare any speeches. She just printed out some articles and statistics about four major issues that she thought we should know about (one for each week). She had no way of knowing that it would change my life. But she actively attempted to help others discover a more meaningful way to live – and she succeeded.

Social influence also doesn't have to be an organized thing. It can be a little comment – like my friend Mike's comment about the Fairtrade chocolate. That was literally a three-minute, casual conversation. But it stuck. You can leverage social influence simply by asking the owner of the coffee shop you frequent if she's ever thought about getting Fairtrade coffee or compostable cups. Or by responding to a compliment on your secondhand or ethically sourced dress by saying "Thanks! I got it from an online secondhand store called ThreadUp. I have a hard time with the labor practices of the shops at the mall, which kinda sucks because the clothes are so cute. But I watched this documentary on Netflix called *The True Cost* and now I just can't bring myself to support the way that they work." And in those three sentences, you've told her about the injustices of fast fashion without making her feel bad about her own choices and you provided a resource where she could follow-up if it piques her interest.

It's true that we are inspired to take action by seeing others do it first, but it's also easier to do when we're not alone. So sometimes, social influence can involve inviting people to join you on your journey. Maybe you could ask your coworkers if they want to bike to work with you

(horizontal influence). And then, together, you could go ask your boss if your company could switch to recycled copy paper and replace the Styrofoam coffee cups in the kitchen with real mugs (vertical influence). In that way, you give people an easy and communal jumping-off point for social action.

One of the biggest things I've noticed as I get people involved in social influence is that most people are totally willing to be involved... they're just waiting to be asked. As in, they actually *want* you to ask them to be involved. Especially if you ask them to do something they're good at, on behalf of something meaningful.

During my first year of graduate school, I conducted my own social experiment about how to get people involved in making social change. I came up with an idea to bridge the gap between two often-estranged and even conflicted communities in the U.S. – evangelical Christians and Muslims. This was in 2015-2016 and relations between these two groups were strained at best. There was a great deal of ignorance, mistrust, fear, and tension between the two. I grew up in Christian circles and after spending some time in my local Muslim community, I began to see that the two had much more in common than they realized. I realized that if the women from these two groups got in the same room together and got to know each other, they could actually be incredible allies and friends. They could start to see their differences as enriching to their communities and relationships, rather than as divisive.

My husband and I were photographers for eight years before I went back to school, so we had tons of connections and friendships in the photography community. I decided that those connections were my best bet for getting this project off the ground for two reasons. First, photography is a phenomenal platform for creating social change. But secondly, and much

more importantly, it was the platform that I had. And we always have to work with what we've got. We must find ways to leverage and build upon the connections, interests, gifts, and social collateral we already have, rather than bemoaning the ones we don't have.

The idea was to create a collection of images that would dismantle stereotypes, facilitate dialogue and create a sense of mutuality between Muslim and Christian women. I had each photographer create a set of images with one photo of a Muslim woman and one photo of a Christian woman, engaged in a similar activity (ie. studying, speaking, making art, being a mother, playing sports etc). The photos were matted side-by-side in a shared frame to communicate the idea that Muslim women and Christian women can and should be united. My goal was to use the exhibit to facilitate meaningful dialogue, build relationships, and create opportunities for mutual transformation.

I started by workshopping the idea to get feedback from people whose insight I valued, and that is when I first learned the magic of asking people. Being new to the Seattle area, I started attending interfaith events in my local area to get to know influencers in the communities I was hoping to reach (Christians and Muslims). A Muslim woman named Aneelah spoke at the second event that I attended and she was one of the most contagiously passionate people I had ever heard. I immediately knew that I wanted her feedback about my project. But even more than that, I desperately wanted her on board with the project so she could share her influence with me (vertical influence). After the event, I lingered until most people had left, then nervously approached her, introduced myself, and asked if I could take her to coffee. It was oddly terrifying asking a powerful, inspirational stranger out to coffee. But she said yes and a couple weeks later I sat her down and pitched my idea. She ended up loving it and even

offered to help. And just like that I had someone more powerful than myself on board. My social influence was growing.

Then I had to get photographers on board, so I sent an email to ten friends who I thought might be interested. In the email, I briefly described the project and asked them to let me know if they were at all interested. Seven of them were, so I picked up the phone and asked if they would help me. They all said yes. Then I asked if they would put me in touch with anyone else who might be interested in helping me, and they did.

The next thing I knew, I was calling up strangers asking if they would donate their time and talent to this project. And I kid you not, at least 85% of them said yes. And that 85% were *thrilled* to be asked! I ended up speaking with the editor in chief of a Muslim fashion magazine, the founders of a peacemaking organization in California, art gallery owners, city councilors, and a female Muslim surfer in Morocco. And when I asked if they would join me, they all said yes.

My original goal was ten photographers and ten sets of photos...and in the end there were seventeen photographers, twenty-three sets of images, and fifty photo subjects spread across seven states (and that one photo from Morocco.) I also ended up getting an organization to sponsor the project (because I called them up and asked if they would sponsor me) and won two separate grants for the project to pay for frames, mats, and photo printing.

I named the exhibit "Redefining WE" and nearly 90 women from all different backgrounds showed up at its grand opening to create friendships across social, racial, and religious boundaries. They moved through the exhibit in small groups while discussing posted dialogue questions designed to help them discover both their similarities and their differences.

After the event, the vast majority of the women who were there reported that it had changed their perception about women from different religious groups. In addition, almost every single photographer who participated reported being changed by the experience of meeting and interacting with women from different religious communities than their own.

And all this happened just by leveraging social influence – that was literally all I used to make this project happen. It was made from scratch, just by tapping into social networks and asking “can you help me?” or “do you know anyone who...?” Then the people I talked to used their social influence to find more people who might want to be involved. The fact that Aneelah used her influence to connect me to the Muslim community (via two Facebook posts and a couple of email introductions) was a big part of what made this project take off the way that it did. Two women in Los Angeles, Michal and Sondos, paved the way for much of the project’s success by offering up their social influence in the peacemaking community. Friends asked friends who asked friends if they wanted to be a part of it, and because women were willing to share their social influence, we created something beautiful together.

This brings me to my next point: it’s always better to do things together. It’s more difficult and less effective to leverage social influence by yourself. If I had tried to make this project all on my own, or insisted on taking all the photos myself, the project would’ve had only a fraction of the impact. So unless you feel like you absolutely have to do something on your own, why make things harder than they need to be? Why not join forces with others, combine your social networks, expand your reach, and multiply the power of your message? The goal is to make the fire bigger, not to make your own as bright as possible. Besides, logs in a fire burn

longer and hotter when they are altogether in the center of the fire pit, feeding off each other. When you separate them, they burn out quickly.

By far, the most effective way to leverage social influence, is to join forces with people who are different from yourself. Connecting and collaborating with people who have divergent backgrounds, experiences, and ways of communicating, or people from a different community than your own is the best way to amplify a shared message. But the collaboration must be equal, mutual and intentional. You cannot dictate how things should go, and must seek to ensure that everyone burns brightly in their own way.

In a world with blatant inequalities and clear social hierarchies, this is a particularly important lesson for privileged people like myself to keep in mind. We have a tendency to talk over marginalized people and people of color because our metaphorical microphone is naturally set to a louder volume than others. For that reason, we should seek out opportunities to use our social influence to direct attention to their efforts, their points, their accomplishments, their ideas, rather than our own. We get enough attention, so let's use it to address inequality.

It's also important to note that social influence doesn't have to be about what *we* are doing. More broadly, it's about changing the conversation, shaping perspectives, inspiring people to take action, or making them rethink their behavior in a way that creates a more just and equal world. This is particularly important among women as we try to change unjust systems. It has been said that "people grow into the conversations you create around them" and that is what this is all about.

Because remember, everything you do matters and nearly everything can be an opportunity to make change. For example, when your co-workers suggest that you grab lunch, you could suggest the place that's owned by immigrants, or the one that uses organic produce and then casually offer a one sentence explanation about why you prefer that spot. In that one simple gesture, you may have made a connection for someone that they might not have made for themselves.

This is another reason why it's so important to get involved locally in the issues that matter to you. How you spend your time and money speaks volumes to those around you. More often than not, what you *do* speaks louder than what you *say*. If you spend your time, energy, and resources on things that are important to you, it's going to impact those around you and change the way they think about their own life. Inspiration and passion are contagious – especially in person!

As I mentioned above, many people are literally just waiting for an invitation to be involved, so go out of your way to invite your friends, mentees, or acquaintances to join you when you do the things that are important to you. You could invite them over to help you assemble homeless packages to hand out to people in need. Or you all pitch in once a month to provide an afternoon off for foster parents in your community. Maybe you decide to form a running group and collectively run a race for a cause that's important to you. Or perhaps you're into essential oils and you make and sell roller bottles of popular blends to raise money for an organization you're passionate about. There are so many ways to get involved, and when you bring others along with you it exponentially increases the disruption in the current unjust

system. You just gotta figure out what your friend group, study group, classmates, etc. can do together to contribute to the greater good.

We do far too many things that are far too meaningless. We are meant to live more fully alive and in more meaningful community with others. Let's take every opportunity to inject as much purpose as possible into our own lives and the lives of those around us. Regardless of whether those opportunities are small and in-passing, or a larger organized effort, they all help shape the way people perceive the world and their place in it.

Remember, the purpose of a match is to burn and multiply its fire. So go burn brightly. And help others do the same.

Reflect for a few minutes.

What is a project that you've been involved in that was driven by social influence?

In retrospect, can you identify any recent moments that could have been used as an opportunity for social influence?

Can you think of anyone off the top of your head that might be interested in or open to conversations about these types of topics?

Chapter 9: Advocacy/Activism:

We want to change systems that oppress women around the world. So, first we started a spark by adopting a lifestyle that doesn't contribute as heavily to injustice and inequality and by living more fully within our passions. Then we used our social influence to help others engage in social action along with us. We've got a small fire going. Now it's time to light this thing up into a legit bonfire. It's time to mobilize, with advocacy and activism.

I'd like to expand our typical understanding of the terms "advocacy" and "activism". When most people hear those words, they probably conjure up ideas of political advocates meeting with their representatives and activists with protest signs. In reality, these concepts are much bigger and more diverse than that. To "advocate" is simply "to speak in support of an idea or course of action" ("Advocate"). We do this all the time. Technically, when you try to talk your boyfriend into eating at your favorite restaurant, you're advocating for something.

Activism is more specifically "the use of direct and public methods to try to bring about social and political changes that you and others want" ("Activism"). This includes protests, marches, sit-ins, petitions, boycotts, etc. But there are so many other ways of being an activist beyond those basic examples. For the purposes of this book, I am going to combine these two types of actions because, when push-comes-to-shove, the distinction isn't terribly important for how most of us are going to go about it.

For our purposes, advocacy and activism is standing in support of something, someone, or some issue, in an attempt to get those in power to make a change (whether willingly or begrudgingly), that will trigger widespread systems change. And this is not just about politics! Advocacy and activism can be done on behalf of social issues. You could advocate for formal

racial reconciliation efforts on your college campus, or you could talk to your faith community about making their kids programs more accessible for little ones with special needs, or you could do something more traditional like call your congressperson or participate in a demonstration. Advocacy doesn't have to look a specific way, it just has to convince the people capable of making a change, to make it.

Advocacy and activism are the big dogs of systems change. It's how everyday people like you and me make change happen on a level beyond our own individual power – by collectively pressuring, shaming, or otherwise convincing social, corporate, or governmental institutions to comply with our demands. And when these tactics succeed, when policies or legislation change, it usually signals a tipping point. Either there was enough pressure to force a change, or society changed so dramatically that systems feel the need to keep up (which is essentially what the previous two tactics are trying to accomplish).

Activism and advocacy require awareness

First things first: if you are going to advocate for social systems or policy change, please be sure that you are doing so from a place of awareness. This means doing research to understand the current situation, the potential solution, and the intended and unintended consequences that it may have. Prior to signing a petition, or calling your representative, or boycotting a product/store, or meeting with an influencer, or joining a protest – learn about the ins and outs of whatever it is you're advocating for. (Before you get overwhelmed, remember that you are only doing this for the issue(s) that you care the most about, not about everything.)

Not doing enough homework before pushing a certain solution has had disastrous consequences in the past, especially in regards to systems change and international policy. When it comes to these types of issues and solutions, nothing is ever simple. *Nothing*. If you read or hear something that makes a policy, problem, or solution sound easy or simple, it's not giving you the whole story. There are a plethora of examples of advocacy and activism going horrifically wrong in recent years because of incomplete story-telling and widespread ignorance. The most infamous examples are probably the botched Kony 2012 campaign by Invisible Children and the #bringbackourgirls debacle of 2014. Both of these campaigns oversimplified deeply complex issues (and rightfully offended millions of people in Uganda and Nigeria), made no real difference, and suggested a militarized American response in two separate African countries. Ignorance does not help anyone, so please take the time to educate yourself about the issues you care about before you fight for a certain solution.

And don't just read things that reinforce what you already think. You also need to read articles and watch reports by people who disagree with you, while doing your best to keep an open mind. Do they make any good points? Raise any valid concerns? Point out any questions that you should look into? If you do good research, you should be able to see it from the opposite perspective and understand why they feel so strongly about it.

And no cop-out oversimplification or vilification is allowed here. You may not dismiss anyone who disagrees with you as an idiot or a monster – for example, republicans don't oppose abortion because they hate women and democrats don't support it because they hate babies – it's way more complicated than that for both sides. Make an effort to understand

where the other side is coming from before you take a stand. If you think an issue is clear-cut, you don't know enough about it.

As people living in the Global North, we have crazy amounts of power and influence, so our actions have unintended consequences that we often fail to fully consider. We really need to think through our solutions before we advocate for them, and our actions before we take them.

Good activism and advocacy require creativity and perseverance

We must approach powerful people and institutions with the understanding that they are usually under a great deal of pressure to maintain the status quo. Therefore, it's going to take even more pressure to get them to change direction. Proof that we represent a significant portion of society – either through petitions, noticeable shifts in consumer demand, demonstrations, social media buzz, or in smaller cases other people present with us – will help support our argument and convince powerful people to alter course. But we will probably still need to repeatedly pressure, shame, convince, cajole, or otherwise force change to happen.

Keep in mind that we are not shaming *people* – we are shaming *institutions*.

Occasionally, yes, there is a person at the helm of an institution who has behaved badly and we must speak out against their behavior. But let's stay focused on behaviors, policies, and actions. We have no business attacking anyone personally no matter how deeply we disagree with them. Humiliating, mocking, or attacking people does not make change and reduces us to their level. So, let's follow the directive of my dear-friend-in-my-imagination Michelle Obama and remember that, “when they go low, we go high” (Obama).

Degrees of Engagement

There are multiple levels of engagement when it comes to advocacy and activism, which is great news for all of us because it means we can engage on a level that we are comfortable with and ease our way into it. That being said, I am always going to push you to go to the edge of where you feel most comfortable, and then take one step further. That's how growth happens. Plus, I'm convinced that most of life's most worthwhile ventures take us outside our comfort zones.

Online Activism

In this modern age of social media and internet, we've seen the rise of what has been variously called "slacktivism", "clicktivism", or "hashtag activism." This term essentially encapsulates the idea of social media-based activism that has low personal cost in regard to time, risk, energy, resources, etc. This includes things like tweeting (or retweeting), signing an online petition, or reposting an article on Facebook.

The efficacy of these tactics is hotly debated. Many people argue that taking action on social media makes us feel like we've done something to contribute which makes us less likely to take more meaningful action. In a compelling article for the *New Yorker*, Malcom Gladwell made a case that since social media is built on "weak ties" rather than personal relationship, those platforms only motivate us to participate in exceptionally easy, low-risk ways. Gladwell writes that "Facebook activism succeeds not by motivating people to make a real sacrifice but by motivating them to do the things that people do when they are not motivated enough to make a real sacrifice." According to Gladwell, not only are these actions very low-risk, but they are also "the kind of commitment that will bring only social acknowledgment and praise",

rather than bringing about any real social change. Instead of taking a digital stand, Gladwell argues that we must show up in person and take on some personal risk in order to change the system.

Other people argue that engaging with companies and governments directly via social media can be an effective way for the public to make their demands known. For example, in 2015, an India-based nonprofit called Jhatkaa.org used a YouTube music video to call attention to Unilever's corporate misconduct in India.

Unilever owned and operated a thermometer factory in a city called Kodaikanal until it was shut down by activists in 2001. However, up until that time, the factory was exposing workers to high amounts of mercury and dumping toxic byproducts into the land and waterways. As a result of Unilever's toxic polluting, the community has experienced many tragic problems, including children who show signs of mercury poisoning and the death of some of the workers due to complicated health issues. In order to pressure Unilever to clean up their mess and make reparations, Jhatkaa used a multi-platform approach, including a music video, an online petition, and "Twitter action targeting Unilever global CEO Paul Polman" using the hashtags #WontBuyUnilever and #UnileverPollutes (Lathia).

The music video, featuring a female rapper named Sofia Ashraf, went viral and as of early 2017 had garnered 3.9 million views. As a result, the hashtag also picked up momentum on Twitter and nearly a half a million people around the world started swearing off Unilever products (including brands like Dove, Axe, Dermalogica, Hellmanns and Knorr). Unilever was understandably concerned by this sudden, global boycott of its products and the CEO, Paul Polman took to Twitter to engage with people personally, assuring them that the company was

“determined to solve” the problem (@paulpolman). In the end, Unilever caved to the public pressure and compensated the community in a deal that everyone deemed satisfactory (Lathia).

People will likely always debate the effectiveness of online activism and advocacy, but the fact remains that it is happening. And while there have been times that it ended in disaster (i.e. Kony 2012), it can also be used for good. However, despite the potential of social media activism, I remain convinced that lasting peace and systemic change must be made in person.

From A Safe Distance

The next level of engagement is taking activism and advocacy offline and into the real world – but at a distance. These activities require slightly more commitment and risk, but are still relatively minor. Examples would be letter writing campaigns, calling your representative, sending personal emails to people in power, donating money, boycotting/buycotting, etc. All of these actions require you to do something offline, but would not connect your physical person with the social action in the moment that it’s done.

Once again, engaging in this kind of activism requires creativity. There is more than one way to approach these things and honestly, the more creative we get, the more effective it’s going to be. A good example of this kind of activism is protest art. Banksy, the mysterious street artist who often makes political and social statements with his art is probably the most famous modern example, though protest art has been used for centuries. Politically charged graffiti was also used extensively by protesters during the Arab Spring uprisings and to great effect by The Guerilla Girls, a masked feminist art collective formed in New York City in 1985 and continues to this day (guerillagirls.com). Building awareness, helping people see things differently and

expressing dissatisfaction through art is a powerful way to mold social norms that eventually demand systems change. That's why governments tend to quickly paint over protest art - they understand the power of symbolic dissidence and noncooperation. They know that small acts of insurrection can often embolden larger ones.

Donating, or soliciting donations to advocacy organizations would also fall into this category and is one of the best ways that you can support systems change for the causes you're passionate about. Nearly every issue has an organization working on the legislative or legal aspect of the problem, which is critical work. Providing financial support is crucial for pushing through policy or organizational-level change, because doing so is often time-consuming and expensive due to the high level of legal and political expertise necessary for success. This type of contribution could be as simple as a campaign donation to a school board candidate that supports educational policies you're excited about, or donating to an organization like Polaris Project that advocates for tighter legislation and enforcement of anti-trafficking laws around the world.

An interesting example of this type of advocacy organization occurred in the diamond industry during the late 1990's. The concept of conflict or "blood" diamonds was largely unknown up until this point, when the collaborative efforts of a few, relatively small nonprofit organizations catapulted it onto the global stage. The first organization to research the problem of unethically sourced diamonds and advocate for corporations to clean up their sourcing, was a tiny nonprofit called Global Witness. Their report specifically targeted De Beers diamond company and found that the company could be held responsible for some of the violent conflict and slavery that was taking place in the countries where they mined diamonds. Global Witness

also appealed to the corporation's own ethical standards and commitment to corporate social responsibility, calling them out and exhorting them to act in accordance with their own principles (Bieri and Boli 349).

This caught De Beer's attention, but it wasn't until Global Witness started a consumer awareness campaign that De Beers really paid attention. At this point, Global Witness didn't have the influence to launch an effective awareness campaign, but they hid that fact from the diamond companies, so while "the vast majority of consumers remained completely ignorant, De Beers became gravely concerned about the possibility of a boycott" (Bieri and Boli 350). De Beers was especially anxious that their product's symbolic meaning would be tarnished by rumors of exploitation, violence, and slavery, so they moved quickly to fix the problem for their own company.

A tipping point in the campaign came when one of the nonprofits involved in the campaign convinced Martin Rapaport, a prominent figure in U.S. diamonds, to take a trip to Sierra Leone to see the violence and destruction first hand (Bieri and Boli 350). Mr. Rapaport was so moved by his trip that he wrote a widely-circulated article about his experience and became an influential voice in changing the industry as a whole. It was around this time that more nonprofits and the UN picked up the issue, and the truth of unethically sourced diamonds really blew up. The feature film "Blood Diamond", starring Leonardo DiCaprio was released, as were several other major pop references to the issue, including a song by Kanye West called "Diamonds from Sierra Leone".

Fortunately for them, De Beers was ahead of the curve due to their previous contact with Global Witness, and they took a lot of pride in leading the industry towards change.

Between the support of Mr. Rapaport and De Beers, the nonprofits that originally led the charge on this issue were able to push for and even help establish a new process for certifying ethically sourced diamonds called The Kimberly Process (Bieri and Boli 351).

This is an interesting case in that nonprofits were able to change an industry almost exclusively through advocacy campaigns. Global Witness' consumer awareness campaign didn't take off until industry change was already well underway, and they didn't have any political backing. But their research was so potentially damaging that simply threatening to make it public was enough to light a fire under the corporations and make them clean up their act. These are the types of advocacy organizations that deserve our investment and support.

You could also use your money to advocate for systems change by withdrawing your investments in institutions with questionable ethics. You could go beyond boycotting to ensure that your investments and mutual funds are being invested in more ethical or sustainable companies (for example, ones that create clean energy) rather than in notoriously unethical ones (like oil companies). There are whole investment firms that specialize in ethical investments to ensure that investors aren't supporting or even profiting on unjust systems, structures and policies. The most common types avoid oil and fossil fuel companies. I draw the line at offering financial advice, so if this option is interesting to you, talk to your financial advisor about it. If you do withdraw your investments from these types of companies, I would strongly encourage you to write a letter, send an email, or make a phone call to let them know what you did and why you did it. As a lost shareholder, your feedback will be valued and could influence their future decision making.

As you can see, there are a vast number of ways to engage in advocacy that are personal and yet still fairly low-cost. However, the type of advocacy and activism that is most effective also requires the highest level of risk.

In-Person Advocacy and Activism

This is the most daring type of advocacy and activism, but I would also argue that it is the most effective. Right off the bat, I want to make it clear that I do not support the use of violence or weapons in any way, shape, or form in the name of activism. While I understand why some people argue that violence can be necessary to free the oppressed, their argument makes me wonder: are we really, truly free if we are left with blood on our hands? So, while violence may sometimes seem necessary, I do not believe that it is ever justifiable. This conversation gets messy quickly, so let's leave it at that. I just wanted to make my stance on nonviolence exceptionally clear before we move forward.

A guy named Gene Sharp developed a comprehensive list of 198 nonviolent social actions, and it is by far the best collection of activism ideas that I've found (I included in the back for your reference). His list offers an insight into the massive variety of options that you have for taking action or becoming an advocate for the causes that you care about – from symbolic lights (i.e. a candle in your window) and rude gestures, to pray-ins and non-consumption of boycotted goods (i.e. the Boston tea party). I'm not necessarily suggesting that you need to organize one of these, unless you want to, but I would recommend that you find a way to participate in something like it.

There is a growing number of opportunities to join public demonstrations in the Global North – protests, marches, sit-ins, walk-outs, picket lines, etc. But those are not your only

option. You can also wear a symbol of solidarity or protest (the safety pin that gained popularity in January 2017 is a good example), participate in a town-hall meeting, go to an interfaith event, or attend a vigil. You could host a peacemaking get-together and have people in your community over to discuss important issues in person, and with love. This could also be as simple as speaking up at a PTA meeting to advocate for better support programs for underprivileged children in the district.

I recently discovered a fun and creative example of this in my own city, in the form of the Seattle Labor Chorus, “a nonprofit organization dedicated to economic and social justice, and the fundamental right of all workers to organize as a means of securing a living wage” (Seattle Labor Chorus). The chorus attends rallies, protests and union meetings and performs songs (some original, some covers, some re-worked classics) to draw attention to social inequalities and injustices in four-part harmony. I had the privilege of hearing this group perform at an event I attended, and they are some of the most incredible, socially active people I’ve ever met. And they could sing! They approached the topics with passion, but also with a sense of humor that made them unforgettable. According to their website, “membership is open and there are no auditions... while the chorus primarily serves the labor community, its repertoire reflects the concerns of all who wish to promote a healthier, more equitable society”. In addition, every member that I spoke to was also involved in social activism in other ways. One of the guys was getting on a plane that very night to go join the Standing Rock water protectors in North Dakota.

In addition, showing-up in person doesn’t have to be in public, or with masses of people. You could schedule a one-on-one meeting with a city council person to ask if they would draft a

bill to make your city a sanctuary city. Or you could meet with your faith leader about getting your community actively involved in refugee care – either locally or overseas. Or you could talk to your boss about getting the company to match employee’s charitable donations.

One of the most critically important ways to be an activist and advocate is to stand up for the vulnerable in everyday life and conversation. This piece overlaps with the “social influence” chapter, but I wanted to draw a distinction between dropping hints or casual conversation, and directly standing up for a marginalized or vulnerable people or groups. I think most of us have been in social situations where we’ve heard derogatory, prejudiced, or racist comments. We probably felt like we should say something, but we didn’t know how to do it or what to say. So we stayed quiet. Those are missed opportunities for some of the most important advocacy that we can possibly do. If the people making the remarks are members of a powerful social demographic (white, straight, cis-gendered, and especially male) it becomes even more important because, even if they aren’t powerful individuals in the traditional sense, they hold a great deal of social collateral. Changing the way they see things is key to changing culture and society. So the next time you hear something offensive, oppressive, or exploitive... challenge it. Stand up for people who aren’t there to stand up for themselves, and who probably wouldn’t have the social power to make a difference even if they were. Take that moment to become a bridge between the people who need to be heard, and the people who need to listen. While they might not listen to a member of the community that they insulted, they just might listen to you. If you have their ear, speak. There are some excellent online guides about how to do intervene in these situations – what to say, how to say it, etc. – that I’ve included in the back of the book.

These things may feel small, but there is something incredibly powerful about physically putting yourself out there in defense of someone or something else. You can't say that people don't care when they show up in person and stand before you. And there is something particularly deep and moving about large groups of people coming together to support or resist something. It's raw and undeniable. And often, demonstrations of that sort are an indicator of social currents which then affect the way industries, corporations, and governments position themselves. Showing up in person plants a flag in the ground that the rest of society is forced to acknowledge and respond to.

Regardless of how you go about it, the most important piece of this approach is simply *showing up*, in person, to support something important to you. Again, I don't care what it is, I just care that you're an active part of it. In our region of the world, our right to express our opinions publicly is protected and we ought to take advantage of that.

Take a few minutes to think through these things.

Do you consider yourself an advocate or activist? Why or why not?

Reflect: Can you recall any moments when you felt like you needed to stand up to or for something, but didn't? What was it? What do you wish you would've done or said?

Did this chapter spark any ideas or thoughts? Jot down whatever they were:

PART III – There’s no time like the present

Chapter 10: Start Simple

Now it’s time to move onto the fun part where we take action and make a difference. I promise that there are ways to tackle these seemingly overwhelming issues without killing yourself. As a reminder – the best way to affect global change is simply to become a more passionate version of yourself and to reject the “need” to spend all of our time, energy and money on stuff that isn’t important in the big-picture. But we’re not going to get there all at once, so let’s break it down and start small.

One of the easiest ways to address injustice in the world is to turn the unintentional negative impacts we’re having on the world into positive ones. These involve minor tweaks to our normal habits and patterns that may feel insignificant, but meaningfully contribute to a movement that is bigger than we are. These actions don’t even necessarily have to be things that we’re necessarily passionate about. They’re more like habits that are easy to change but also contribute to global justice. It would include things like switching to Fairtrade coffee, tea, sugar, or chocolate (which are all now readily available and only cost a little bit more), or switching to non-toxic cleaning products for the sake of the environment (they are just on a different aisle at the store, but the cost is comparable!), or giving only non-material or ethically-sourced gifts to friends to decrease consumption and waste (Bonus: you’ll also be leveraging social influence!).

Sometimes the hardest part of making any sort of change is *starting* – but an easy and approachable first step will help us get going. Plus, according to the American Psychological

Association, starting small increases our chances of sticking with it (“Making Lifestyle Changes”). If we start with something that doesn’t terribly disrupt our life, or even makes our life easier, it will make the next step more realistic and more likely to happen. So start by purchasing those period panties, or by adding a wide variety of perspectives and sources to your news app or radio stations. Or donate a small amount to an organization you’ve been meaning to give to and then follow them on social media so you have follow up on other opportunities to give. Or, instead of purchasing something for a one-time use, borrow from friends or your local Buy Nothing page.

I’ve also found that it’s easier to change our spending habits if we start with luxury items. Don’t start by swearing off all plastic products or buying all organic clothing for your children – that’s not realistic. It’s much easier to change your spending habits on things that you don’t actually need and that won’t significantly affect your life.

A year or so after my family committed to only eating Fairtrade chocolate (a luxury item), I also committed to only ever buying Fairtrade or ethically sourced jewelry (also a luxury item). Because I don’t actually *need* any more jewelry. This commitment keeps me from impulse buying cheap, slave-made jewelry at chain stores, and when I do buy something (every couple of years...jewelry *lasts*), I cherish it because I spent money on it and I know that it supported something worthwhile (fair wages). Also, there are dozens of awesome ethically sourced jewelry companies (MADE and Noonday are a couple of my favorites), so this is an easy commitment to keep. The only time I couldn’t keep this commitment was when I lost my nose ring and couldn’t find one that was Fairtrade. I ended up buying one from Etsy so at least it was

hand-made. It was the best I could do. Nothing is perfect and this is a process - just do your best!

The other great thing about starting small is that it eases the people in your life into your new perspective and may even help them join you on the journey. As I started the process of trying to live more intentionally in order to contribute to social change, my husband, family, and friends thought I was a little bit crazy. But because we started small, it helped everyone keep up. They didn't have to watch themselves around me, and there was no whiplash – it was just a little thing here or there. Now, years later, most of the gifts I receive are Fairtrade or ethically sourced, and I see more and more of my friends supporting ethical brands. It provides an impetus for people to think about these things for both you and themselves. Often, the problem is simply that people haven't thought about it, so seeing someone else make incremental changes can provide the push they need to take small steps of their own.

April is a triathlete, a wife, and mom of two. She is busy, to say the least. But she found an opportunity to use kid's birthday party invitations as a way to give back and involve others in the process.

Instead of buying the child a gift they don't need, she sends a text or email the week before that reads:

"Thank you for inviting _____ to _____'s Birthday party! We are excited to celebrate with you.

Our family does Birthday presents a little differently. We wish to make a donation in your child's name to a charity of his/her choice. Please speak with your child about an organization he/she* is passionate about and let me know so we may make a \$20 gift in his/her* name. If you'd like to see a list of organizations chosen in the past please let me know and I'd be happy to provide that.*

Hope this works for your family instead of a traditional gift. Our hope is this gift will facilitate broader conversations on the idea of giving.

*We look forward to hearing from you.
April"*

While some people might not understand this approach, most will appreciate the thought behind it and the opportunity to talk to their child about meaningful things (McGonigal).

This change doesn't add stress to April's life, saves her a trip to the store, makes a positive impact on the world, and leverages social influence.

It's also good to have a contingency plan in place for when you encounter obstacles to making a more positive impact with your spending and lifestyle. This is called "coping planning" and it "can protect good intentions from distractions" by providing a back-up plan when we face barriers to follow-through (Sniehotta et al 567). For example, my back up plan when I couldn't find an ethically sourced nose ring was to purchase it from Etsy. While I can't be assured that the metal was ethically sourced, at least I knew the final product wasn't made by slaves. When we first started only eating Fairtrade chocolate, I ran into a couple of obstacles when I needed to bring a dessert to an event or party and couldn't find the Fairtrade version of what I wanted. So, I started only planning non-chocolate desserts, to alleviate the problem altogether. It kept me from thinking "screw-it... this is too hard" and buying the slave-tainted chocolate or giving up forever. I would encourage you to think about what you'll do when the \$10 shoes at H&M are *really* cute, or it's Christmas and you think your kids need all the plastic toys, or whatever your weakness is.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge and recognize that buying ethically and avoiding cheap labor costs more money than you're used to spending on some items. But... hopefully you're buying *less*, so it should even out. Once you fully embrace this, you'll end up like my minimalist friend Jenna, and find that you have *more* disposable income than you did before. We need to change our perspective on having and being able to afford less. It is not a bad thing! It's alleviating inequality because if we spend wisely and buy less it will mean that others can afford more. Plus, having more is not worth the knowledge that someone is being enslaved so you can have it. Easing into that concept and its effect on your life is the best way to sustain it.

I want to emphasize the fact that until we recognize the hold that consumerism and spending have on us, we can't really make an effective impact on the world. We cannot effectively help people who are trapped in systems of poverty and injustice until we address our own messed-up habits and priorities because it's all interconnected and interdependent.

Starting small is absolutely the right call, and for some extraordinarily busy people like moms of young kids, it might be the best you can do. But if we stay in the small steps, our impact is also going to be small. Until we significantly cut back on the time/energy/resources we spend consuming, we won't have enough to invest in things that are truly meaningful to us or in efforts to change the world. And if we don't invest in those things, the cycles of exploitation and oppression will not be interrupted.

If you want people to be free, you must free yourself. Our salvation is wrapped up in and dependent on each other's. So, for your sake, and for the sake of your sisters around the world, catch this spark. Refuse to be used for anything other than your deepest intended purpose. You are more than your money.

Take a few minutes to think through and answer these questions:

What are 3 small changes you could easily make to decrease your contribution to unjust systems?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What is one thing you can do in the next 24 hours to move towards this type of lifestyle?

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Eat vegetarian one day a week – this saves countless gallons of water, tons of corn and wheat (which are usually genetically modified and require mass amount of chemicals), and the lives of animals.
- Always use a personal cup when you get coffee (always keep one in the car – JIC) to avoid making unnecessary waste.
- Stick to a list when you go to a one-stop-shop like Target. If I only need a couple of things, I limit myself by either not getting a cart, or only getting the small carry basket. I get so annoyed with carrying so much stuff around that it makes me not meander through the store and buy random crap.
- Avoid the mall – just don't go. There's almost nothing in the mall that you actually *need*. Come up with a way to get whatever it is you want without going to the mall. Then you only buy the things that you're looking for, rather than the stuff that caught your eye.

- Stop watching shows that make you feel like you need something – whether that’s a show that makes you want to go shopping for yourself or make over your house – it’s unlikely that you actually need anything.
- Unsubscribe from ALL of your shopping, coupons, and flash-deal websites. You don’t actually need anything they are selling.

For you and your friends:

- Do a challenge together to not buy any clothes that you don’t absolutely need for 4-8 weeks (pick something realistic for you).
- Go one step further and challenge each other to not buy anything that you don’t absolutely need for 4 weeks. It’s harder than it sounds and it will help you recalibrate your spending habits.
- Look up the 333 Challenge and see if it’s something you’d be into.

Chapter 11: Choose Your Starting Point

The truth is that we're all passionate about different things, and not all of us have a social issue that makes our hearts burn with anger or sadness. And that's ok! You can be driven to live in a meaningful way and have a positive impact on the world around you without having a particular global issue that gets you fired up. As the saying goes, "It's takes all kinds to make the world go 'round."

Because of that fact, there are essentially two places to start figuring out what *you* can do to pursue your passion and thereby interrupt systems of injustice and positively impact the world:

1. Start with a social issue you're passionate about (ie. mental health, poverty, clean water, race relations, education, etc.) and figure out what you can do *about* it using your skills, knowledge, resources, etc..
2. And/or start with a non-cause-related activity, skill, expertise, etc. that you're passionate about and figure what you can do *with* it to positively impact the world.

For example, some of us are passionate about business, others about sports, travel, music, marine biology, law enforcement, videography, dance, or politics. Others are passionate about homemaking, veganism, fitness, fashion, or brewing. The list could go on forever. And even though the interests on that list aren't obviously or explicitly connected to social change, every single one of them can be used to *make* social change.

Some people are going to be most excited, and find ultimate meaning, in using what they're passionate about to make a positive impact wherever they can. And that's fantastic! Other people are passionate about a certain social issue and doing whatever they can to make a

difference within that issue. And that's also awesome! Neither starting point is better than the other because the best-case scenario is that we all become more passionately ourselves. The goal is *not* to become passionate about the most seemingly noble and worthwhile cause.

Because the most noble and meaningful thing you could possibly do is be the best, truest, most whole version of yourself and then figure out how *that version of you* can positively impact the lives of others. That is where life is. That is where purpose is. And that is how we interrupt cycles of consumerism and disrupt global systems of female oppression.

So whether your passion is obviously justice-related (like clean water or peacemaking) or seemingly unrelated to social issues (such as sports or accounting), there is a place for you and your passion on our journey towards a more equitable world. The category that your passion falls into simply determines where you start this journey – not where you end up.

But what if you have no idea what you're passionate about? If that's you, you're not alone.

Chapter 11: Identify your passion

Many people struggle to identify what makes them feel alive or gives them a sense of purpose. On top of that, “passions” are so incredibly varied and full of possibility that using

The ladies behind VETTA Capsule – Vanessa and Cara – knew that there had to be a way to pursue their passion for fashion design without contributing to the injustice of the fashion industry. So they created a brand that sets a new bar for the fashion industry.

Each season, VETTA releases a mini-collection of five ethically and sustainably made pieces that can be worn thirty different ways. The goal is to help us cut down the number of pieces we buy, while also improving the fashion industry’s production practices.

Vanessa and Cara “understand that every aspect of our supply chain has an impact on people and the planet,” which is why all of the fabrics are either deadstock (leftover fabric that they save from ending up in the landfill) or sustainable (“VETTA”).

All of their products are sewn in a family-owned and operated factory in New York City, and all of their packaging is made from 100% recycled materials.

Vanessa and Cara turned their passion for design and fashion into an opportunity to change cultural norms and global systems. (Vetta).

them to make social change is rarely clear cut.

That’s why figuring out what you’re passionate about and how *you* can make a positive social impact can be more complex than it sounds.

It’s also why there’s no simple answer – what you can do is totally different than what I can do and vice-versa. This section is all about helping you discover what lights your soul on fire, and what you can do to stoke that fire.

To get the most out of it, I would recommend going through this section slowly.

Take days or even weeks to complete it. Talk it over with friends, significant others, or family.

Take however long you need to think these things through, process, remember, reminisce, research, and activate your creativity.

To start, I’d like to have a candid discussion about interests and passions. In particular, I’d like to acknowledge the fact that most of us do not have a singular lifelong interest, that passions can be difficult to identify, and that they change over time.

It is an incredibly rare individual who identifies their passion at an early age and pursues it consistently over their course of their life. There is another commonly held belief in our society that people who do good work have always been passionate about the thing they're working on, which implies that we have to have always known what we're about in order to do good work.

Newsflash: that's not how it works.

Passions aren't discovered – they're *developed*. We decide to become passionate about something by following our interest past the point where most people give up. Think of your friend who is a passionate musician. You think she was born passionate about music? Nope. She might have been born *interested* in music, but she became passionate about it by spending more time pursuing it than the rest of us cared to.

If you don't know what you're passionate about, that probably means you're not passionate about anything at this moment, *which is totally ok*. If that's you, stop trying to discover your passions, and instead, start trying to identify your interests.

Interests are easier to identify than passions, partially because they have “much lower emotional stakes” than passions (Gilbert). That is, we feel pressure to know what we're

My friend, Ra, followed her curiosity towards spirituality and mysticism by reading ancient spiritual texts and practices. She then started exploring those themes in her own life, experimenting with various contemplative practices put forth by the spiritual fathers. But several years ago, her interest lead her down a new train of thought: How did mysticism and spirituality intersect with her life as an activist and a woman of color? All the mystics she was studying were ancient white guys who lived in caves. They had never applied their concepts to life in society, let alone to life as a Latina woman in a turbulent, racist, patriarchal country.

Instead of dismissing that thought, or walking away from her interest out of frustration, Ra ran towards it. She knew that there was a rich history of both spirituality and activism among women of color, so she started reaching out to other people on social media who were involved in these things to see how they integrated the two. It turned out that Ra was not the only one feeling these tensions, so a few women got together to discuss the possibility of creating a “People of Color - Centered approach to action & contemplation, grounded in healing” (Mystic Soul Project). They have since started an organization and conference called the Mystic Soul Project to facilitate this type of contemplative practice in their own context and to reclaim their spirituality. (Mendoza)

passionate about because that seems like a really big deal, whereas being interested in something is pretty non-committal. Interests come and go, they wax and wane, and no one expects you to change the world with them. Interests are no big deal.

Plus, “if passion is a tower of flame, then *curiosity is a modest spark*” (Gilbert, emphasis in the original). So, get curious and drum up some interests...even if they feel random or disconnected. What was the last book you heard about that piqued your interest? When was the last time you thought “I’d love to try that someday”? Start there. We all have to start somewhere, and that somewhere is often messy and scattered.

That’s why most passionate people have a series of false-starts or some kind of dark-and-twisty journey before they arrived at where they are now. We all start by taking a few steps towards our interests and then we either decide that we don’t want to invest anymore time, or that it’s a fulfilling and worthwhile thing to spend our time and energy on. Dr. Shelley Prevost observed that for most people, a sense of calling “starts as an inkling (“I’d like to try that”) then swells into a mandate that you just can’t shake” (Prevost). And the process of getting from “inkling” to “mandate” is exploratory, which is a nice way of saying “chaotic” and “nonsystematic.” Your first “inkling” might not turn into your passion – you may have to test out a variety of different interests before you find one that sticks and turns into something more.

Many people can’t identify their interests or passion points except in retrospect. It is common for people to get invested in an interest and then start seeing themes or connections throughout their life that led them to the point that they are at now. But they often say that during the process, they couldn’t see the theme. That’s also why many people end up

identifying formative experiences during childhood or young adulthood that relate to the issue they're passionate about, even though they didn't see it as a "passion" until much later.

For example, I have a vivid memory of being eleven years old and defiantly challenging a teacher about a blatantly misogynistic comment that he made. Looking back, I have no idea where that sense of moral outrage came from, but I remember that I couldn't *not* say something – the anger was too hot to ignore. I didn't identify gender equality as a passion until nearly twenty years later, but I look back now and see women's empowerment as a thread that runs through my life, starting with that moment.

Two decades after that experience, I read a book – *I am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai. And as I read it, I thought to myself – *this* is what I should be doing with my life. She did whatever she could to challenge injustices against women. She wrote, she talked to teachers, she studied, she spoke. She went out of her way to make change and said "yes" to every little opportunity to speak out against injustice. Reading that book (which a friend gave me because she thought that I might be interested in it) ended up triggering an inescapable need to change my life and pursue what started to feel like a calling.

At that point, all I knew was that I wanted to do something meaningful and that I was passionate about "gender-related issues." That one incredibly broad phrase (essentially anything that had to do with women) was all I had, so that's where I started.

I used a super scientific method to explore my interest: Google searches. I literally just started Googling words or issues that I thought might be interesting: like "gender equality, global, what can I do about it," and I discovered that there were hundreds of issues – from women's land and inheritance rights to female genital cutting, girls' education, and

reproductive rights. As I read, explored, discovered, and learned, I made blunt notes about which issues intrigued me and which ones didn't grab me as much. And with each discovery, I honed my interest (and my Google search criteria) as I followed my curiosity. Once I decided that I wanted to work full-time in this realm, I started searching for jobs in the field and imagined myself in each one. Would I be happy? What would I like about this role? Which parts of it would not be as fulfilling? This process helped me figure out how I actually wanted to spend my time and what I wanted to invest myself in. Because I honestly didn't know.

Over the last few years, my interest has developed into a passion for helping women around the globe realize their full potential so we can collectively push the world towards justice. But that's not set in stone. It's probably going to change and grow and shift as I move through life, and with every twist I'll discover something new that contributes to the journey.

Kristine Moreland is a mom of two in her late-thirties who runs a mortgage company and lives in an upscale suburb of Seattle. She also fights homelessness through her nonprofit organization called The MoreLove Project.

She didn't set out to create a nonprofit, or work with homeless people. It happened just by taking one uncertain step at a time toward a deep-seated interest driven by personal experience. Her father has been homeless for the last 30 years, and after a failed attempt to get him off the street when she was 16 years old, Kristine decided that if she couldn't help her dad, maybe she could help others on the street. She started slowly, by organizing a coat drive.

After several years of volunteering for Seattle's Union Gospel Mission and helping people from a distance, she was asked to join a Search and Rescue team, to go out onto the streets and help people. Kristine says her first reluctant day on that team changed her life. She didn't have a plan, but she knew that she'd found her purpose.

Eight years into her Search and Rescue experience, Kristine decided there should be a way for donors to meet immediate needs of homeless people (a hotel room for the night, necessary medications, bus tickets, etc.). She began the simplest way she could think of: a Facebook page where she could post needs and people could fill them. It snowballed quickly. Now, 2 years in, she's a legitimate nonprofit that has raised \$210,000, provided 463 nights out of the cold, sent nearly 200 people home on buses, and adopted 2 children out of homelessness and abuse (one of whom she adopted herself).

During this time, she maintained a full-time job, a husband, and a family. When I asked what she gives up to be able to do all these things, she replied that she doesn't sacrifice anything – except her health (she's had multiple back surgeries in the last few years), her social life (she rarely sees her friends), and her down-time (she has none). When I laughed, she defended her statement by saying that “it doesn't feel like a sacrifice because my heart feels full all of the time. The things that most women are seeking – fulfillment, joy, etc. – I've found them in my work” (Moreland).

My point here is that “discovering your passion” is not a neat and tidy process. It’s messy and ongoing and most people feel lost at some point along the way. But as long as you keep moving toward what feels soulfully meaningful and important to you, you’ll be on the right track.

My one truly concrete insight into this process is that it’s easier to steer a moving ship. Sitting around waiting for inspiration to strike and trying to figure out your passion by thinking about it isn’t going to work. You’ve got to start moving in order to figure out where you are and where you’re going. It’s like if you’re driving around in a new city and you get lost. Pulling over and hoping you figure out where you are (even though you’ve never been there before) isn’t going to work – you’ve got to keep driving in order to find street signs or landmarks that can help you understand where you currently are and which direction you need to go. Even if you don’t have a clear direction – just start moving. You can always turn around if you think you need to. Making a U-Turn is not the worst thing you could do. Never leaving the parking lot is the worse thing you could do.

So...what is your spark? It’s time to start thinking, feeling, and remembering to figure it out.

Here’s a couple of tips to get you started:

- Don’t overthink it – write down your first thoughts and gut reactions without filtering them. We often dismiss initial thoughts as shallow, but they are often insightful.
 - Think of how others might answer these questions for you (or straight up ask them!)
- Sometimes we’re too close to see the themes in our own life – like the friend who identified my interest in gender equality and girl’s issues before I did.

- Remember: Your interests do not have to be justice or cause related. We are just trying to identify them, and *then* we'll figure out how to use them in meaningful ways.
- You don't have to answer every question – these are here to help you. Skip the ones that aren't helpful to you.
- Don't make a big deal about where you start – it doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is where you end up.

Ok! It's Go-Time: Grab a notebook, or a piece of scrap paper, or if you're a verbal processor like myself, grab your significant other or a friend(s) and give these questions some thought:

- *When was the last time that you felt fully engaged in something you enjoy?*
- *What was the last (non-personal) thing that made you angry?*
- *What were you doing the last time that you felt fully alive and completely "you"? What was it about the experience that made you feel that way?*
- *Which news stories have lingered in your mind recently? What is it in the story that particularly gets to you?*
- *Ask your closest friend what he or she thinks your interests or passions are. Then ask a family member what they think (spouse, significant other, parent, sibling, etc).*
- *What were you really into as a child? As an adolescent?*
- *When was the last time you felt the urge to lecture or correct someone about something? What was it about?*
- *What would you love to be really good at?*
- *If you could make the world different in one specific way by tomorrow, what would that difference be?*
- *What do you love to talk about?*

It's important that you figure out what you're at least deeply interested in before you move forward. Unfortunately, the next section won't be terribly helpful if you have no idea what you're interested in. You don't need to have totally committed to a cause, but you do need a direction. If you don't have one yet, go back and keep exploring your interests until you find something you're excited about.

Chapter 12: Start with a social issue (*Option #1*)

**If you know what you're passionate about and it is non-cause-related (ie. a skill or activity of some kind, rather than a specific social issue), please skip to the next chapter to figure out how you can use it to make a difference.*

This chapter is going to help those of you who are passionate about a certain social issue figure out what you can do about it. As we go through this, it's going to be critical that you remember the ground rules we covered in Chapter 9. Go back and review them if you need to.

I am going to lay this out in the most straightforward way possible, but please understand that most people's process will not be clear and linear like this. You may get into the first step and realize that you need to change directions, or you might discover something that catapults you back to step one. As we established in the previous chapter, this journey tends to be messy. So use this chapter as a map – but don't be afraid to venture out from it and figure out what works for you. The point is to insert yourself into the issue and become familiar with the landscape so you can get involved. You gotta get *into* it and make it part of your life in order to figure out how you fit within the issue, and how it fits with your life. My dad always says that "starting the process clarifies the calling," and he's totally right. Just *start*. Wherever! Take a few boldly-uncertain steps towards your issue. I swear it will start to make more sense and feel less overwhelming once you do.

A head's up that finishing the next section, which is laid out like a handbook, might take a while – days or weeks. Go through it at your own speed. This process cannot and should not be rushed, so take the time to do it well.

Step 1: Learn more about the issue.

Do some research about the history, root causes, and wide-reaching consequences of the problem. You cannot effectively help from a place of ignorance. The point of this step is to orient yourself to the conversation surrounding the issue and begin understanding the complexities of it beyond what drew you in. You need to learn at least a little bit about its causes, nuances, controversies, consequences, and key players.

Are you ready to get curious?! Start following your interests – that’s how you stoke the fire of passion.

Liz is the volunteer director of GLSEN Wichita, which strives to create school environments where every student is “valued and treated with respect, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression” (“Improving Education”).

She didn’t set out to work with the LGBTQ community – in fact, as a straight, white, cis-gender Christian mom, she thought she was the least-qualified person to do this work. But opportunity after opportunity came up in her life and despite a great deal of resistance from people in her community she took one brave step after another towards her interest.

Her decision to formally get involved, started with a phone call to an organization called GLSEN that she randomly saw a TV commercial for. She was curious about it, so she picked up the phone “just to ask questions” (Hamor). Taking the pressure off and calling just to explore her options is what gave Liz the courage to pick up the phone in the first place – she was just exploring!

If you don’t have any idea what to do or where to start – just start pulling on any thread you find. It’ll be much easier to pick a direction once you’re moving.

Start on your own:

- Learn the lingo and language of the issue – every issue has key-words. You need to understand the terms that insiders use and why they are a big deal. Language matters.
- Use Google Scholar (the academic search engine) to find some journal articles about the issue to learn the science behind it.
- Read books (check your local library).
- Watch documentaries (check Netflix).
- Listen to some podcasts.

Get Connected:

- Find people who know more about the issue than you do and ask if you can get together to pick their brain. Even if you don't know them – be bold! The worst they could do is say no. If that happens, I promise you'll survive.
- If possible, attend local events that are related to your issue – even if they aren't directly related. Due to the intersectionality of social issues, there are often overlap in people and organizations. For example, when I was starting my study about women's oppression, I attended a reading by the author of a new book about diversity and gender equality in the workplace. Even though it wasn't directly related to what my area of interest, I wanted to explore all possible connections. So, After the event, I asked her if I could meet her for coffee the following week. That coffee meeting ended up being one of the most informative, orienting conversations of my research experience.

Stay at this and keep learning until you see the complexities of the issue. If you think the problem and/or solution is simple or straightforward – you don't know enough about it.

Step 3: Break it down

Once you understand the ins and outs of an issue, it's likely that you will begin to understand what you can do about it. But it usually still takes some creativity. I can give you tons of examples, but you still need to take these ideas and make them your own by doing what *you* can do about it. This process can feel intimidating and difficult, so let me walk you through it.

Since most social issues are so intensely complex and on such a massive scale, it's important to break them down into manageable and approachable pieces before you try to figure out what you can do about it. For example, if you are passionate about ending sex

trafficking, trying to figure out how you can address that problem as a whole is *way* too big and overwhelming. Of course you're going to feel like you can't do anything about it! It's like trying to eat an elephant in one bite! People who are making a difference on these big issues are usually trying to address specific pieces of the problem – not the issue as a whole. Because that's how to make a dent in it. You're one person... so break down these massive issues into more approachable pieces – root causes, sub-issues, consequences, related problems, etc. That will make it possible for you to figure out how you can contribute and make a difference.

Since you did your research, you should be able to do this fairly easily. It doesn't need to be comprehensive, just think of a few sub-issues, categories, or causes. If you can't come up with at least 3-5, go read up on the issue some more.

Here are a few examples for you to follow, and there's a blank version after the examples for you to fill out.

Issue: Sex Trafficking

Sub-Issues, Causes, or Consequences:

- Teen homelessness and barriers to employment.
- Failure of the Foster care system to provide services to graduates.
- Lack of effective regulation on the pornography industry.
- Cultural norms of toxic masculinity and misogyny.
- Legal loopholes and lack of resources to convict traffickers, making it a fairly “safe” crime for the perpetrators.
- Lack of resources and awareness of the dangers for at-risk people.

Issue: Animal Rights

Sub-Issues, Causes, or Consequences:

- Animal testing for cosmetics and other products.
- Risks posed by pollution to marine animals.
- Use of animals in fashion (leather, furs, etc).
- Rampant euthanasia of animals in local shelters.
- Effects of deforestation on animals in the Amazon and other jungle habitats.
- Unethical sourcing of palm oil and its effects on animals.

Primary Issue: Unclean Water in Developing Countries

Sub-Issues, Causes, or Consequences:

- Child illness and death due to diarrhea.
- Women are often assaulted while walking far from their community to fetch the water.
- Women and children spend the bulk of their time fetching water and don't have time for other things – like education, farming, or other means of supporting themselves financially.
- Makes sanitation impossible, contributing to the spread of other communicable diseases.
- Makes effective healthcare impossible.

Got it? Now it's your turn:

Primary Issue: _____

Sub-Issues, Causes, or Consequences:

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

Step 5: Identify your strengths, skills, knowledge, or resources

Now, list everything that you're good at or knowledgeable about or have extensive experience with. At this point, don't worry about pinpointing skills that you think might be useful. Don't over think this! Just start writing everything you can think of, regardless of how random or unhelpful it seems. If you struggle, ask a friend or someone who knows you really well. Here's some of my list as a reference:

- Writer/Editor
- Photographer
- Entrepreneur
- Business degree
- Public speaker
- Experience with children (mom)
- Travel experience
- Good at brand and business strategy
- Decent amount of chutzpah
- Don't mind being outside my comfort zone

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Step 6: Put it all together

Everyone is capable of being creative, even if you don't consider yourself "creative." In their highly-recommended book *Creative Confidence*, Kelley and Kelley give practical ideas for how to engage your creativity in order to come up with good ideas. One of their suggestions is to do a mind map to help you come up with fresh ideas. You may have done this activity in school growing up, but essentially, it's visual brainstorming that fosters innovation. (See page 124 for an example.)

For our purposes, we are going to start with one of the sub-issues you identified in Step 3 and use a mind map to come up with ways for you to engage it. If you can break it down even further, to be even more specific, that would be even better. And don't feel like this is boxing you in because I would recommend doing this with several sub-issues, to see what you come up with. Pursuing more than one option keeps you from putting all your eggs in one basket and will help you embrace the fact that you may not come up with your most genius idea on the first round. And that's totally ok! Creativity doesn't work on a clock. Plus, if figuring this stuff

out was super easy, you wouldn't need this book. Do your best to roll with the non-linear nature of this process.

For this exercise, I'm going to have you pick one of the sub-issues that you identified and write it in the middle of your paper. Then keep your list of skills handy and keep glancing

Gabi is a full-time graduate student and works 30 hours a week. But she is passionate about people doing their part for the world and cares deeply about environmental issues. She already doesn't shop a lot and is generally eco-conscious, but when she got engaged, she saw an opportunity to do something different – both for herself and to influence those around her.

She and her fiancé Mike are going everything as ethically and sustainable as possible. A few of the sustainable choices Gabi has made are choosing invitations that are printed on seeded paper (you literally plant the invitation in the ground and wildflowers grow), a second-hand dress (cost-effective and sustainable!), and since many hot-house flowers are slave-tainted, she found a gorgeous, eco-friendly bouquet made out of recycled wood flowers online (Dobies).

It might not single-handedly change the world, but it is changing her piece of it by not contributing to slave labor, bad production, or unnecessary waste. It's also going to have an impact on everyone who attends the wedding and sees the amazing event she put on in an ethical and sustainable way. Maybe it will inspire someone else to do the same and the next thing you know, it's the new norm!

back at it. Then just start brainstorming ways you could contribute to solving that issue or make a positive impact on it. Follow your train of thought and write down any and all ideas that come to you, building on each one in order to dig past your initial thoughts into true creativity and fresh ideas. It doesn't matter if your ideas seem silly, ridiculous, or impossible. Maybe *that* one is crazy, but the one behind it might be genius and if you shut down the process, you'll never get to those genius ideas. Just write it down! Stop filtering yourself and let your creativity run free.

One thing that may or may not stimulate your thinking (depending on how your brain works) would be to consider what ideas you can

come up with within the three categories of engagement that we discussed in the previous section – lifestyle change (including local activities and actions), social influence, and

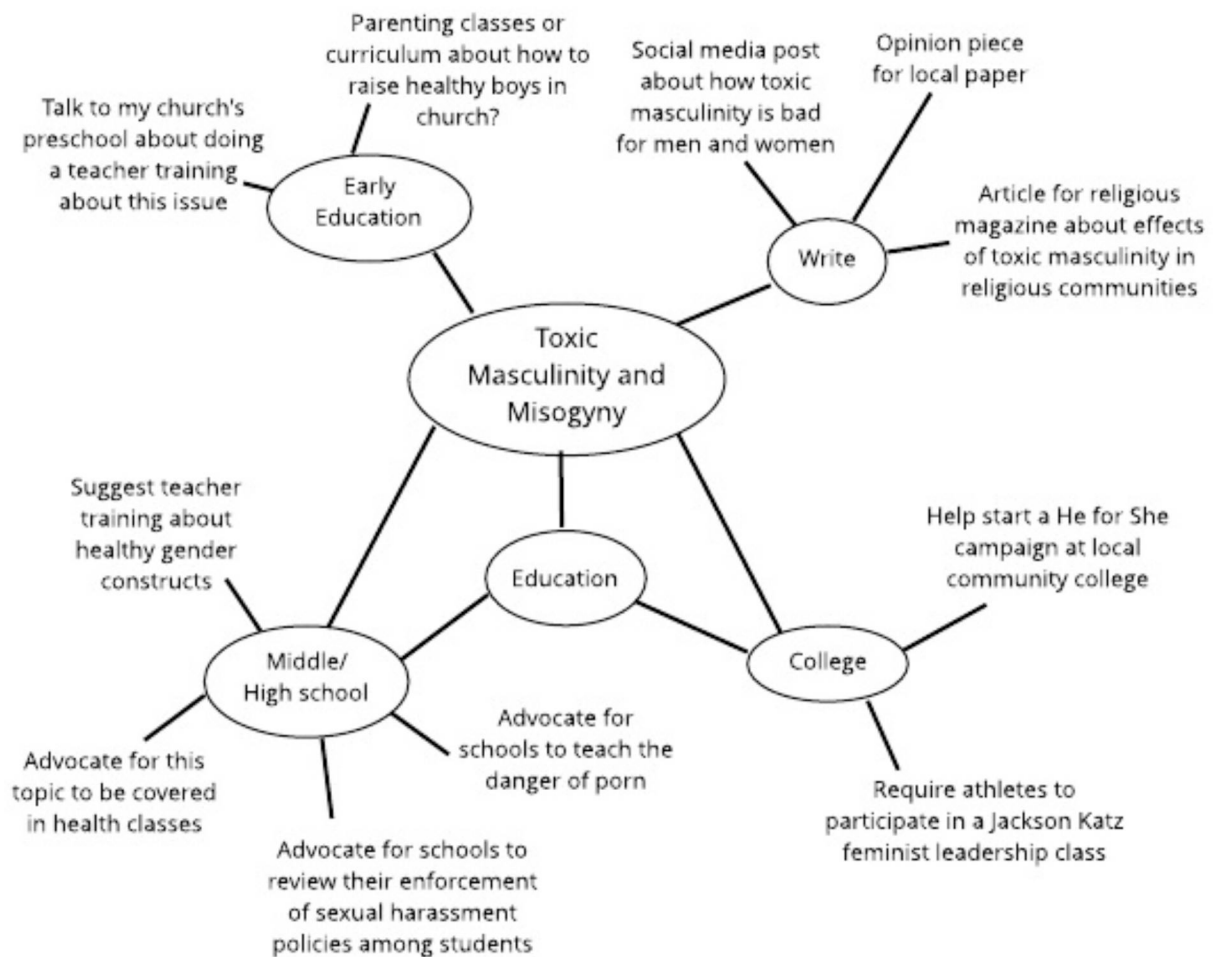
advocacy/activism. You can give your brain a little bit of direction about where it should wander by thinking about

1. What you can do personally
2. How you can get others involved in this issue that you're passionate about
3. How you can convince those in power to make systemic changes.

Some people's brains work better with some boundaries and others work best with ultimate freedom, so do what works best for you.

Really quick, I want to warn against feeling pressured to think of *the* solution for these problems, or to figure out how you should devote the rest of your life to these issues. That is not what this is about and pressure will only stifle your creativity – like stage fright for your brain. This is about getting started – it's a brainstorming map. If you screw up, throw it in the recycle bin and start over. In addition, once you're in it, who knows what will happen? Long-term planning for social action rarely pans out because the world is constantly changing. Opportunities will arise, your opinions might change, you'll make connections, and stuff comes up. So just explore potential starting points. It's ok if your ideas are vague or you don't know where to start on them. The next step will walk you through how to flesh them out.

Here's an example of a mind map for a sub-issue of sex trafficking based on my own strengths. I picked "teen homelessness and barriers to employment" to start with simply because it's the most up-my-alley. Hopefully, your mind map will be much more extensive than this – I just ran out of room on the page. But this will at least give you an idea of what I'm talking about and how to get started.



Ok! It's your turn! I left this page blank for you to be able to start here (I didn't want you to have any excuses for why you can't do this *right now*). Give yourself at least 20-30 minutes for each mind map.

Again, unless there is one particular sub-issue that you are exceptionally passionate about, I would recommend that you do a mind map for more than one of them. It will allow you to be surprised by an idea or an unexpected insight.

Once you've got a number of ideas down and at least one that you're excited about (even if it feels vague), it's time to get started on it!

Step 7: START

This is where the rubber meets the road. It's time to stop thinking about these things and start doing them in real life. We are going to flesh out your ideas and figure out action steps for how to execute them. If at any point in this process you discover that your idea is impossible, or terrible, or you hate it - no big deal! Just pick a different one and start over.

Write down your idea(s) for engagement or action (even if it feels vague):

Are there any organizations already providing the solution you came up with? If there is, can you get involved with them? Spend some time searching the internet and various social media platforms. Write down any promising leads and then contact them:

Are there other individuals already doing this? Search social media for hashtags, accounts, or pages. Jot down anything you find particularly interesting:

Who do you need to collaborate with to make this idea happen? List people or organizations:

What tools, resources, or information do you need to make it come to life? List specifics:

What is one thing you can do within the next 24 hours to start making this happen (it can be super small)?

What are two things you can do in the next week to move you forward in this effort:

List two people you can tell about this idea and ask them to check in to make sure you're following through:

Now text those people right now and tell them about this idea. While you're at it, see if they want to join you.

Now, close this book and go do the thing that you said you could do in the next 24 hours. I'll wait.

Once you're done, skip to the last chapter on page 139.

Chapter 13: Start with a skill, talent, knowledge, or resource (*Option #2*)

**This section is for those of you who are passionate about something that is not explicitly cause related. Although the core content and order of the steps is different, some ideas and processes are repeated from the previous chapter.*

Since the very best thing we can do to interrupt systems of female oppression is to reject our own exploitation by becoming more passionately ourselves and focusing on things

Elizabeth and Dave Cutlip run a tattoo shop in Brooklyn Park, Maryland. One day they had a former gang member ask if they could cover up a gang-related tattoo – he had changed his life and was being held back by the prominent ink.

It got them thinking... There were probably tons of people who had racist or gang-affiliated tattoos that could change their life if they didn't have them. So, Dave put up a simple Facebook post offering to cover up any racist or gang-affiliated tattoo for free with no questions asked.

They got such an overwhelming response that they started The Random Acts of Tattoo Project and a GoFundMe page to keep the work up for as long as possible. At the time of writing they had raised \$17,000. Every Tuesday in their shop is dedicated to covering up offensive ink (Moyer).

They aren't necessarily passionate about race relations or anti-gang initiatives, but they are passionate tattoo artists – so they identified a problem that they could provide a solution to and went for it.

that matter, we have to embrace what that looks like for each and every one of us. Maybe you're a passionate engineer, or a painter, or an entrepreneur, or an architect, and you want to make a positive impact, but you don't necessarily have a specific social issue that you're passionate about. You just want to do something meaningful, impactful, and good for the world. That's amazing and I'm so happy you're here.

A lot of people assume that the world needs more bleeding hearts or development professionals, but what the world actually needs is more people with special skills, expertise, or

resources to use those things for good. In other words, the world needs more of *you*.

As we move forward, it's going to be critical that you remember the ground rules we covered in Chapter 9. Go back and review them if you need to.

Step 1: Get Inspired

- Start simple – do some Google searches to see if there are organizations or programs specifically designed to help people with your passion/skill/expertise get involved. Organizations like Engineers Without Borders, or Ride Africa (an organization where cyclists can sign up to bike across Africa to raise money) exist precisely to help people like you.
- Also look into what other individuals who share your passion are doing. People all over the world have good ideas, and there’s no reason for you to reinvent the wheel.
- Search social media to see if there are any campaigns, Facebook pages, hashtags, or Instagram profiles dedicated to helping people like you do something good. There are all sorts of things like #hairstylists giving back, #gardenforgood, or #socialentrepreneurship that could provide an opportunity or inspire your own effort.
- Notice the social issues that people with your same skillset and strengths are addressing. Do any of them particularly appeal to you?

Inspiration is all well-and-good, but until you can figure out how to integrate it into your life, it’s not all that useful. Now that you have an idea of the possibilities, let’s figure out what you can actually do.

Step 2: Identify Needs and/or Opportunities for Engagement

Regardless of your interests or expertise, I’m sure you’ve encountered social issues, opportunities for engagement, or areas of potential improvement... but you might not have noticed them. Identifying these issues can be somewhat challenging if you haven’t been on the lookout for them. It requires looking at your everyday experience in a new way.

In their book *Creative Confidence*, Kelley and Kelley argue that everyone is capable of being creative. Throughout their book, they give practical ideas for how people can

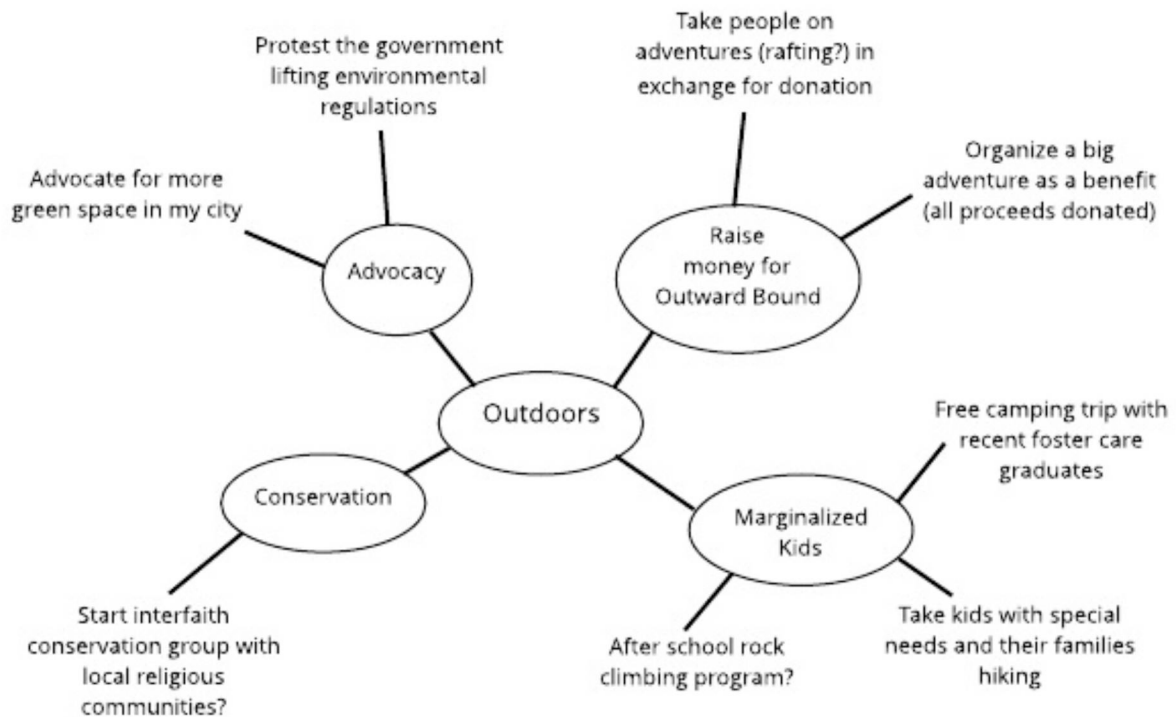
engage their creativity and come up with good ideas. One of their suggestions is to do a mind map to come up with fresh ideas. You may have done this activity in school growing up, but essentially, it's visual brainstorming that fosters innovation. (See page 141 for an example).

For our purposes, we are going to use your passion as our launch point. Try to be as specific as possible. For example, if you are passionate about business, I would break it down further and be more specific. What aspect or type of business are you most passionate about? Is it entrepreneurship? Or accounting? Branding? Sales?

And it's totally fine if you love more than one topic! I would highly recommend that you do this exercise with several different specific interests or skills, just to see what you come up with. Pursuing more than one option keeps you from putting all your eggs in one basket and will help you embrace the fact that you may not come up with your most genius idea on the round. And that's totally ok! Creativity doesn't work on a clock. Plus, if figuring this stuff out was super easy, you wouldn't need this book. Do your best to go with the non-linear nature of this process.

Here's how this works: Write your passion (or sub-category of it) in the middle of your paper. Follow your train of thought and write down any and all ideas that come to you, building on each one in order to dig past your initial thoughts into true creativity and fresh ideas. It doesn't matter if your ideas seem silly, ridiculous, or impossible. Maybe *that* one is crazy, but the one behind it might be genius and if you shut down the process, you'll never get to those genius ideas. Just write it down! Stop filtering yourself and let your creativity run free. Analyzing ideas as they occur stifles creativity.

Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about. Here is a mind map that I created around the passion of the outdoors:



One thing that may or may not stimulate your thinking (depending on how you brain works) would be to consider what ideas you can come up with within the three categories of engagement that we discussed in the previous section – lifestyle change (including local activities and actions), social influence, and advocacy/activism. You can give your brain a little bit of direction about where it should wander by thinking about

4. What you can do personally
5. How you can get others involved in this issue that you're passionate about
6. How you can convince those in power to make systemic changes.

Some people's brains work better with some boundaries and others work best with ultimate freedom, so do what works best for you.

Really quick, I want to warn against feeling like you have to think of *the* solution for these problems, or to figure out how you should devote the rest of your life to these issues. That is not what this is about and pressure like that will only stifle your creativity – like stage fright for your brain. This is about getting started – it's a *brainstorming* map. If you screw up, throw the paper in the recycle bin and start over. In addition, once you start actually get involved in social action, who knows what will happen? Long-term planning for work like this rarely pans out because the world is constantly changing. Opportunities will arise, your opinions might change, you'll make connections, and stuff comes up. So just explore potential starting points.

It's just so much easier to meaningfully contribute once you're already doing it because getting started is absolutely the most difficult part. You gotta just get the ball rolling! Remember, the point of this mind map is to identify starting points. It's ok if they're vague. The next step will walk you through how to flesh it out.

Ok! It's your turn! I left this page blank for you to be able to start here (I didn't want you to have any excuses for why you can't do this *right now*). Give yourself 20-30 minutes for each mind map. If your brain gets tired or you hit a wall, take a break.

Again, unless your passion is something super specific like yoga (rather than “fitness”) or Volkswagen vans (rather than “cars”), I would recommend that you do a mind map for more than one thing. It opens up the possibility of being surprised by an idea or an unexpected insight.

Once you’ve got a number of ideas down and at least one that you’re excited about (even if it feels vague), it’s time to move onto the next step.

Step 3: Research your proposed solution and the social issue it addresses

Here’s the thing: your idea might be brilliant. But it also might have unintended consequences that you haven’t thought of. Because you are an expert in your area of expertise, rather than the social issue you’re trying to address, you need to make sure that you don’t waste your time or accidentally cause more harm than good.

- Look up your potential solution (just a simple Google search) in order to find out:
 - Is anyone is already doing your idea? If so, can you join them?
 - If there’s no way to join them, what you can learn from them?
 - What success they’ve had? Has anyone identified any problems or unintended consequences?

- You’re already an expert about your passion point, but do a little bit of research into the issue that your solution addresses – particularly to understand its causes and complexities.
 - Use Google Scholar to do some research about the population or group that your solution addresses.
 - Read some articles about similar programs.
 - Look up some documentaries about the broader issues to gain context (check Netflix).

Run your idea by someone who is knowledgeable about the social issue it addresses and ask for their honest feedback.

- Similar to the way I ran my photo project by Aneelah, find someone who is more connected or educated about the issues and get their take on it. Is it a good idea? Is there anything you should be aware of? Any way it could be improved? Any advice on how to make it as successful as possible?
- While you're with them, take the opportunity to ask if they have any connections to help you get it started.

Step 4: START

This is where the rubber meets the road. It's time to stop thinking about these things and start doing them in real life. It's time to flesh out your ideas and figure out action steps for how to execute them.

Write down your idea(s) for engagement or action (even if it feels vague):

Who do you need to collaborate with to make this idea happen? List people or organizations:

What tools, resources, or information do you need to make it come to life? List specifics:

What is one thing you can do within the next 24 hours to move towards making this happen?

What are two things you can do in the next week to move you forward in this effort:

List two people you can tell about this idea and ask them to check in to make sure you're doing them:

Now text those people right now and tell them about this. While you're at it, see if they want to join you.

Now, close this book and go do the thing that you said you could do in the next 24 hours. I'll wait.

Chapter 14: Get up and Go

Friends, we have recognized the shallowness of our culture in passing, without understanding its full effect on ourselves and our sisters around the world for far too long. We know that happiness doesn't come from stuff and yet we continue to pine over the things we wish we had, instead of enjoying the things we got during our previous attempts to find contentment.

Life is found in meaning, purpose, and authenticity. Joy comes from being more fully *you*. And like Christmas and all truly important things, life and joy do not come in a box. The reason you even think they might is a lie, sold to you by a corporate marketing team whose sole purpose is to make you feel unsatisfied and discontent.

You are being used for your money. Abused for your purchasing power. And as a result, women in the Global South are used for cheap labor. Abused for their desperation.

This system must change.

The only entities that stand to lose anything from the disruption of this system are the transnational corporations that profit off of women worldwide. I'm not suggesting we tear down the economy – simply that we make it work for everyone by valuing everyone equally and fully. Women in the Global North are more than a growth market. They are people, trying to be deeply and humanly present in their lives, who have more to contribute to the world than anyone realizes. Women in the Global South have the power to remake their countries, and therefore the world, if only they had the opportunity and resources to do so. We all have so much to give! Why wouldn't the world want to free women to contribute to society on a deeper level than they currently do? This situation is like having an iPhone and only ever using

it for the compass feature. It's a massive waste of an incredibly powerful thing that has so much to offer!

Women can and will revolutionize the world. But the first step is for those of us in the Global North to wake up from our stupor of consumption and recognize that we are unintentionally oppressing others. We must wake up to that truth and end the oppression of both ourselves and our sisters. This revolution must start with us because we have the power and the opportunity to free ourselves.

And if we reject our own exploitation, it will disrupt the cycle of female oppression and improve the lives women around the world.

The world has mistaken us as passive for far too long – they have misjudged the latent fire we have inside. A match looks benign enough until it catches fire.

There is a three-step process for how we do this.

First, we must be fully ignited ourselves. We must realize that we are meant for so much more than the life we've been told to aspire to, and then we need to change our lives to reflect that reality. The life that we aspire to should be fully authentic and revolve around the things that give our lives true meaning and purpose, whatever that looks like for us.

Second, we must figure out how to get others to catch fire with us. These concepts must be picked up on large scale if they are going to make a difference. Most of the women you know are probably oblivious to their situation as both oppressed and oppressor. We've got to open their eyes and invite them along on this journey toward freedom. A match is still fairly benign until it is used to light a proper fire.

Third, we've got to take this fire to the people and offices that control systems. It will fizzle if it doesn't get picked up by the people who can turn it into a legitimate bonfire.

Changing rules, practices and regulations are critical to changing the world. We must advocate for justice. *Persistently*. Giving up and accepting injustice as "the way it is" is not an option.

I know you get it. We agree intellectually. But now it's time to align our lifestyle to these truths.

I think I've made a solid case for living differently. For finding our spark, changing our lives, helping others find their own fire, and doing everything in our power to disrupt systems and structures of injustice. But now we actually have to do it.

Before I close, I want to stress the importance of making different choices, because it's the hardest part for me... and it's what ultimately matters. When I'm out and about, it's easy for me to make the same choices I've always made because it's convenient and simple. Plus, change is difficult. No matter how much I support these concepts, I don't *want* to put down the cute pair of cheap shoes. I don't have *time* to make sure my clothing is recycled. It's easier to maintain the status quo than it is to forge a new path. Plus, I'm *tired*.

All of those are valid struggles and actual excuses I've used in the past. But the fact remains that it doesn't matter how much we *care* about oppressed people if we don't actually *do* anything about it. So, let's turn our brains on and prepare to make different, more intentional choices. Even if, in the moment, that pair of shoes doesn't feel like it's going to make a difference. It is! We discussed that in Part I and II. But if you want to multiply the impact of not buying those shoes and make it more worthwhile, text a friend about it! Turn that little moment of not buying cheap, slave-made shoes at Target into an opportunity to leverage social

influence by pulling out your phone, snapping a photo, and sending it to a friend with the caption “I really want these shoes, but I just read this super awesome, but disruptive book and now I can’t buy them without knowing that I’m supporting slave labor. Ah well – probably didn’t need them anyway. They’re cute though, yeah? *shoe emoji* *flexing arm emoji*.” Then save that money for a pair of ethically sourced shoes from Everlane, or donate it to something you care about.

Start wherever and however you can. Maybe you start with making more time for yourself by practicing minimalism in your scheduling. You could reevaluate which commitments are truly *necessary* and start saying no to stuff. Or maybe you start by reevaluating what minimalism means in regards to spending. Then, once you have space, you can start exploring your passions, interests, and skills.

I also want to stress again that this is vastly easier if you don’t try to do it by yourself. It will make all the difference in the world if you have a group of people on this journey with you. Find a group of friends, schedule a night to meet with a bottle of wine every week or every-other week, and figure out what you can do *together* to inject meaning into your lives and escape the rat race of consumerism. Discuss the implications of cultural norms and assumptions on your lives and wellbeing as women. Figure out how to instill healthier norms in your children. Maybe do some minimalism challenges together, organize a clothing swap, do a fundraiser, or start a book club with the resources in the back of this book – the possibilities are endless. But you are far more likely to follow through on this if you do it *with* others.

Also, be aware that, like the rest of life, this journey is twisty and full of ups and downs. Sometimes you’ll fail or miss opportunities. Your fire may even fizzle out every now-and-again.

But it's ok as long as you don't let it stay out. Make mistakes and learn from them. Then do better next time.

The truth is that we have too much while the rest of the world has too little. And neither of us deserve our circumstances. We don't deserve to be rich any more than they deserve to be poor, so we need to share and learn to be ok having less, rather than always expecting to give out of excess. This is important stuff, and we actually have to do it.

I hope that despite the difficulty and the intensity of these issues, you now see the importance of these things and the power you have to change them. I cannot do this myself – I am just one little match, looking for the rest of the box of matches to join me so we can all catch fire together.

You have to choose to do it. You have to decide to catch the spark and live on fire.

Will you join me?

Resources for Change

Further Reading

Everyday Justice by Julie Clawson. Practical, everyday ways to live more justly.

Half the Sky by Nicholas D. Kristof

Toxic Charity by Robert D. Lupton

When Helping Hurts by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert

Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies by Seth Holmes

The Promise of a Pencil: How an Ordinary Person Can Create Extraordinary Change by Adam Braun

Minimalism

Documentaries

I Am (Amazon)

Minimalism: A Documentary About the Important Things (Netflix)

Happy (Netflix, Amazon)

Books

Minimalism: Live a Meaningful Life by Joshua Fields Millburn & Ryan Nicodemus

Enough: Finding More by Living with Less by Will Davis Jr.

The More of Less: Finding the Life You Want Under Everything You Own by Joshua Becker

Clutter Free with Kids by Joshua Becker

Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less by Greg McKeown

You Can Buy Happiness (and It's Cheap): How One Woman Radically Simplified Her Life and How You Can Too by Tammy Strobel

Websites

LifeEdited.com

NoSidebar.com

TheMinimalist.com

BeMoreWithLess.com

BecomingMinimalist.com

ArtofSimple.net

Conscious Consumerism

Apps

Good On You – Ethical fashion app that ranks and rates brands and companies.

Avoid – internet plug-in that prevents your browser from displaying clothing that may have been made by minors.

Not My Style – Recommends which brands and stores to avoid, and which ones to support. Also has a feature to let you tweet at or email brands to ask them to do better, or congratulate them for being awesome.

DoneGood – Changing Mobile Shopping for Good (shopping app).

GoodGuide – Health, social and sustainability ratings for consumer products (includes barcode scanner).

Boycott – Information about Corporate standards and Behaviors (includes barcode scanner).

iRecycle – Information on how and where to recycle virtually anything.

OpenLabel – Scan product barcodes and find out the ethics

Books

The Story of Stuff: The Impact of Overconsumption on the Planet, Our Communities, and

Our Health-And How We Can Make It Better by Annie Leonard

Overdressed: The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion by Elizabeth L. Cline

Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-hand Clothes

by Andrew Brooks

To Die for: Is Fashion Wearing Out the World? by Lucy Siegle

The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets,

Power, and Politics of World Trade - 2nd Edition by Pietra Rivoli

Documentaries

The Story of Stuff – storyofstuff.org

The True Cost – Netflix

Food Inc. – Netflix

Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret – Cowspiracy.com

Before the Flood – Amazon

Social Media Accounts

@TheKindGuide

@ProjectJust

@SimplyLivAndCo

@ShopEthica

@FashionRevolution

@EthicalIndex

@ConsciousStyle

@EthicalBrands

Blogs/Websites

SimplyLivAndCo.com

ShopEthica.com (@shopethica)

LifeStyleJustice.com (@HannaMTheisen)

FashionRevolution.org

TheHonestConsumer.com

The Note Passer

Practical Activism Resources

GlobalCitizen.org

Results.org – Activist group working to end poverty

Speak Up! Responding to Everyday Bigotry by The Southern Poverty Law Center

“Sensible Responses to White Nonsense” by *Meta-activism.org*

“Bystander Responses” by *StopStreetHarrassment.org*

“How to Help if Someone Is Being Harassed” by Anna North. *New York Times*. November 23, 2016.

The Nonviolence Handbook: A Guide for Practical Action by Michael N. Nagler Ph.D.

“198 Methods of Nonviolent Action” – Gene Sharp

activistshandbook.wordpress.com – One thousand ways to take action

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