

When Will It End?

Deonte Moses

It was a normal Wednesday night when I saw it on Benjamin and Eliza's story. I had just preached a sermon the Sunday prior about how it is my belief that it is God's intention, and it is God's will, for every human being, regardless of skin color, demographic background, or sexual orientation, to prosper right here in this land He has granted us. Not understanding the power of these words subconsciously, a week later I found myself deeply embedded in a movement that would change the narrative of my life in the humblest of ways.

A little bit about who I am . . . By the time I had reached the seventh grade, I had been suspended more than twenty times. I can still hear the sarcasm in the administrator's voice as I paraded through the doors of the main office for the umpteenth time that same day. She faced me with a piercing look of revulsion, and I will never forget this day of the coin toss. She reaches in her pocket, pulls out a nickel, looks at me, and says, "Heads is three days! And tails is five, Moses!" never even giving me the opportunity to plead my case because I had always justified my behavior with mere excuses and ambiguity.

Therefore, as I slept in that tent outside of the Durham police station for eight days with my fellow activists and pastors, I was reminded of this incident through the kids I'd seen riding their bicycles across the street, living in an environment where all you know is what you see in front of you.

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Not only was this fight for justice so heavily impacting my moral reasoning, it had also become a personal issue because I wanted to know how long we must live in a system where it is lawful to spend billions of dollars on war artillery, advanced technology and so forth, yet there are kids who live fifteen minutes away from me in Durham who are starving and walking around without shoes on their feet. This became a war of righteousness versus unrighteousness for me as a minister that would not only change the course of my life forever but would also change the lives of those who were around me.

The Other America Movement is what they call themselves. The movement is influenced by a speech that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr gave at Stanford and is led by a radical young man with a heart for liberation and freedom. I quickly found myself captivated by this man's words and passion as he preached the importance of Black economic independence and the food insecurity that has crippled inner-city Durham. Initially, the movement started as a peaceful call to witness. All that I and other protestors who committed themselves to the demonstration wanted was for city officials to listen and take us seriously. For days, as we slept in those tents, struggling with the scorching heat day and night, cop cars would circle our tenting ground, not even batting an eye or acknowledging the fact that there were Black Lives Matter activists occupying a space peacefully on their premises. This outraged us, so at 4 am the next day we decided to block East Main Street (one of the busiest streets in Durham), and not allow anybody to enter until a city official came out and spoke to us.

I remember falling asleep and waking up that morning like it was yesterday. As I unzipped my tent and crawled onto the sidewalk, there were already news outlets on the scene, waiting in their cars to document what we all knew would be a day filled with extraordinary events. I walked onto the street, and sitting in lawn chairs in the middle of the road were three men who I will consider my brothers forever. The pain, exhaustion, and disappointment that I could feel in each of my brother's spirits will stick with me for a lifetime. None of us wanted to do this. None of us knew how this leap of faith to inconvenience those who we felt were inconveniencing our people would actually turn out. However, we were still willing to stand up for what we believed was right and willing to accept any consequence for this belief that Black children in low-income communities still mattered too.