

EXCERPT



When We Stand
The Power of Seeking Justice Together

May 18, 2021 | \$16, 224 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-3178-4

Activist Terence Lester knows it's hard to change the world. But mobilizing and acting together empowers us to do what we can't do as isolated individuals. Lester looks at the obstacles that prevent us from getting involved, and offers practical ways that we can accomplish things together as groups, families, churches, and communities. He helps us find our place in the larger picture, discerning the unique ways we can contribute and make a difference.

Community Is a Prerequisite to Solve Injustice

Our hearts have been designed for the kind of kinship and connection that can only come from being in a community with other people. God knew from the very beginning that this type of existence would be the best one: an existence that helps to sustain, empower, and encourage others to live their best lives while simultaneously giving meaning to and enriching our lives. This is the miraculous gift of community; without it, we're missing out on one of the biggest, most significant graces of being human.

In his now-famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," written in April of 1963, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of our basic need to care for each other and to ensure one another's well-being. He asserted that the ability to safeguard each of our human rights is contingent on the human rights of another individual being upheld, regardless of their place on the map. In a defense of his efforts to seek civil rights as an "outsider" in Birmingham, King said: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

King understood that, as individuals, we cannot even live a waking day without engaging in what he described as the "global village" or the "world house." He spoke of how connected we truly are—of how connected we ought to be—in his 1967 "Christmas Sermon on Peace" at Ebenezer Baptist Church:

Did you ever stop to think that you can't leave for your job in the morning without being dependent upon most of the world? You get up in the morning and go to the bathroom and reach over for the sponge, and that's handed to you by a Pacific Islander. You reach for a bar of soap, and that's given to you at the hands of a Frenchman. And then you go into the kitchen to drink your coffee for the morning and that is poured into your cup by a South American. And maybe you want tea: that's poured into your cup by a Chinese. Or maybe you desire to have cocoa for breakfast, and that's poured into your cup by a West African. And then you reach over for your toast, and that's given to you at the hands of an English-speaking farmer, not to mention the baker. And before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you've depended on more than half the world. This is the way our universe is structured. It is its interrelated quality. We aren't going to have peace on Earth until we recognize this basic fact of the interrelated structure of all reality.

Today, the same remains true. Pause for a moment in your reading and examine the labels on your clothing. Find out where your favorite shirt or dress was made. And while you're up, find out where the candle you burn to help you relax was produced. Look much closer than the label and ask yourself who made the textiles? Where's the wax from?

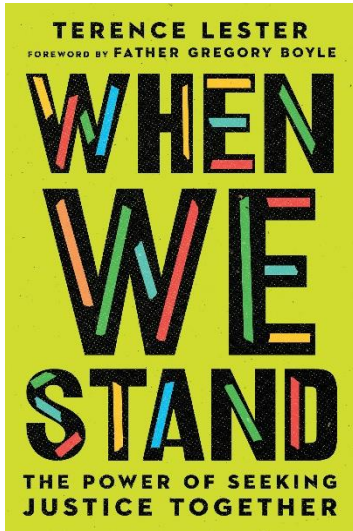


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"When We Stand is a poetic expression grounded in a faith-based perspective addressing a multitude of social injustices and worldly misfortunes. Terence's vision of interconnection and call for action is simply remarkable."

Alieizoria Redd, executive director of Covenant House Georgia

Recognizing that our lives are interconnected is the first necessary step in seeking to understand just how much we need each other, and our call to stand together. Community is necessary for us personally, but it is also a prerequisite of our considerations about how we might respond to—and try to solve—the issues and the injustices that we witness in the world. We need to understand this before we can take a stand and make any significant strides towards serving one another well. This is the main message that we must *all* realize and come to recognize. I believe that this was Paul's main message when he wrote to the church in Corinth: "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it" (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

When we start to see the world through a lens of we, we will fully grasp what Father Boyle means when he says: "There is no 'them' and 'us.' There is only us." By understanding our need for one another and decreasing our levels of isolation, we can actually begin to enter into a spirit of community wholeheartedly, becoming proximate to our brothers and sisters who are in need: our neighbors.

One thing that I've discovered during my time working with communities is just how important the idea of—and the reality of embracing—proximity is. Embracing proximity is not only the means by which we get closer to real-life issues but also how we enter into and develop deep relationships that could be beneficial to our own lives as we seek to achieve justice in the world. Accepting the need to live in proximity to others is how you become seen as an individual—as well as being, in turn, the way in which you have a chance to see and to affirm the dignity of others. Being in proximity to people is how we connect with others to seek justice and change the world. Jesus connected with people whom he was proximate to, so why would it be any different for us? Scripture highlights Jesus' nearness to humanity in his ability to empathize and sympathize with our earthly sufferings: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

Our lack of proximity to one another not only causes us to "otherize" people but it creates more division. No real solutions are developed when we are distanced from each other.

Jesus made a lifestyle of connecting with those who were not like Him. He ate with the misfits, the tax collectors, and the sinners.

When was the last time that we engaged in a meaningful conversation without trying to politicize a Messiah who came to give all for all?

—Adapted from chapter one, "Get Out of Your Bubble"

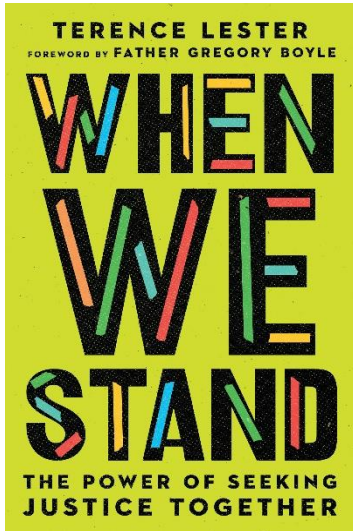


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ENDORSEMENTS



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This book is an encouraging, motivating call to stand together in community and service, written by an activist whose campaigns have mobilized thousands. It offers practical ways for readers to find their place to contribute and includes questions for individual reflection or group discussion.

Locking Arms and Paving the Way for Change

“Terence Lester writes with vulnerability, grace, and truth about the endless possibilities for good in the world when we seek justice in community. You will be changed by reading the Bible through his eyes. You will be inspired by his story, as he has been transformed through his friendships with those most of us overlook. Lester’s book is deeply relevant, practical, and theological—a rare combination! He believes deeply in the God who lives in community as Father, Son, and Spirit and calls us to do the same as we live out our calling to seek justice. If reading the news, scrolling through social media, or watching current events unfold on television leaves you despairing and feeling helpless, *When We Stand* is the book for you. It’s a must-read, offering a tangible and compelling way forward for everyone who wants to follow in the steps of our God of justice.”

—**Karen González**, immigrant advocate and author of *The God Who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong*

“Using faith as both his fuel and fire, Terence Lester solidifies his place and voice as a national leader in homeless advocacy and human rights in his new book *When We Stand*. He brings a clear message of faith and purpose—cutting through the clutter of news cycles and social media noise—and reminds us that humanity, and the love we have for it, is the only way to truly seek justice and obtain it together.”

—**DeMark Liggins**, national chief of staff of Southern Christian Leadership Conference

“*When We Stand* is for those who feel overwhelmed by all the suffering and injustice people are experiencing in our country and around the world. When Terence Lester speaks, I’m listening because he draws from his lived experience, not just untested abstract propositions. This book is a gift from a credible witness.”

—**Drew G. I. Hart**, assistant professor of theology at Messiah University and author of *Who Will Be a Witness?: Igniting Activism for God’s Justice, Love, and Deliverance*

“Doing the hard work of change requires locking arms with others. Terence is one of those courageous friends to me. This book is the guide for justice work, together.”

—**Jeff Shinabarger**, founder of Plywood People and author of *Love or Work*

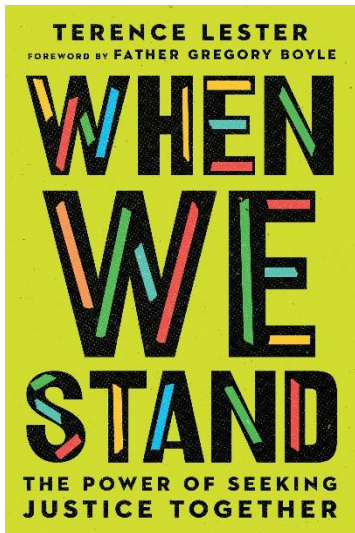


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"Terence Lester is a leader. His words about personal and societal change should not be taken for granted. This book is a gift."

—*Lecrae*, hip-hop recording artist

"Social justice movements that change the course of history are anchored by leaders and followers driven by love, justice, and deep compassion. That's Terence Lester's mission in *When We Stand*—to love, to unite people across differences that divide, and to fight for justice for all."

—**Vicki Crawford**, executive director of the Morehouse College Martin Luther King Jr. Collection and endowed chair in civil and human rights at Morehouse College

"It is said that we are experiencing a second wave of the civil rights movement in America. Sadly, if you look back at history, you'll also see that there was a great deal of inaction and even opposition from the mainstream church during the first movement for justice and equality. For those who take seriously the call to put faith into action and be salt and light in this world, Terence's words and wisdom here will give us much guidance. He has lived the truth he speaks, and his words are prophetic and powerful yet seasoned with grace and delivered with love. May the Holy Spirit move in you and through you as you read *When We Stand*."

—**Susie Gamez**, speaker and writer

"*When We Stand* is a book the world needs right now. There's a lot of talk about how to fix the issues that plague us, but very little action to match. What I love about my brother Terence's amazing book is that he doesn't just talk the talk; chapter by chapter we follow him as he goes into the dark places of society operating as an agent of change, and then he utilizes his experiences to paint a blueprint for the reader. If you've felt a pull to help heal the ails that sojourn within your town, city, or country and don't know where to start, look no further than *When We Stand*."

—**Remi Adeleke**, author and actor

"When I hear my friend Terence Lester speak, I feel as if I'm listening to one of the civil rights prophets of fifty years ago. He is passionate, humble, and has a deep care for the poor and marginalized. That same world-changing energy comes through in *When We Stand*. This book beautifully subverts our cultural moment, calling us to get awkwardly close to one another through empathy, vulnerability, and love. To a culture that often appears unwell, this book feels like a welcome medicine."

—**B. T. Harmon**, creative strategist and podcaster



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BIO



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"In When We Stand, Terence Lester names an age-old solution to the barriers that keep us from playing a meaningful role in positive change and draws a map to help us get there. As someone who knows firsthand the lands we must traverse, Terence doesn't just point a finger toward our desired destination but serves as a guide for the journey."

—Rob Kaple, lead pastor of Grace Midtown Church in Atlanta

Caring Deeply for the Poor and Marginalized

"Terence invites us to embrace a love that is without measure and without regret. It connects us. . . . We are meant, after all, for kinship and connection. We are grateful to have been reminded. In precisely this, Terence Lester is the shape of God's heart."

—From the foreword by **Father Gregory Boyle**, founder of Homeboy Industries

Terence Lester is a speaker, activist, author, and thought leader in the realm of systemic poverty. He is the founder of Love Beyond Walls, a not-for-profit organization focused on poverty awareness and community mobilization. His campaign #LoveSinksIn, providing handwashing stations for the homeless, has been featured on *Good Morning America*, CNN, NBC, MLK50, and TV One and in *Essence*, *Reader's Digest*, *Black Enterprise*, and *Upworthy*.

In 2018, Terence led the March Against Poverty as he walked from Atlanta to Memphis (386 miles). He finished the march and spoke at the historic Lorraine Motel for the fiftieth anniversary of MLK Jr.'s assassination.

In 2019, Terence launched the Dignity Museum, the first museum in the United States that represents homelessness using a shipping container.

He has spoken on the same platform as other civil rights activists such as: Bernice King, Roland Martin, Gina Belafonte, Michael Eric Dyson, Tamika D. Mallory, and many others. Terence's unique approach combines storytelling and digital media to help illustrate social justice issues with practical approaches to solving these ailments.

Terence has written four previous books including *I See You* (IVP, 2019). He also holds four degrees and is working towards his PhD at Union Institute & University in Public Policy and Social Change.



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