

Waiting is easier if you have faith in a better future



Your turn

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Guest columnist

I feel like I've been doing a lot of waiting lately. Maybe you've felt something like that, too.

For one thing, I'm waiting for the pandemic to end. I know I'm not alone in that. We're waiting for days when friends can gather without a second thought. We're waiting to get safely back to work and necessary income. We're waiting to visit loved ones in nursing homes. I'm sure you have plenty to add to that list.

It's not only the pandemic, though. Those of us who've lost loved ones this year, whether due to COVID-19 or other causes, may still be waiting to find what comfort could feel like after the early waves of grief pass. In this season of protests for racial justice, we may be waiting with even more urgency for the peace that treasures Black lives and

lives of color, a peace that isn't satisfied until each part of our community thrives.

When I think about it, I'm really not surprised at all that I've had a sense of waiting. When I feel frustrated by it, I remind myself that waiting doesn't need to be bad. At least, "waiting" doesn't have to mean "powerless" or "stuck."

After all these pandemic months, neighbors still check on those who are elderly or alone. What beautiful ways they've chosen to wait for the pandemic to end. Volunteers still stock food banks and distribute groceries as so many more people face food insecurity. Alongside those working to change conditions that allow hunger to exist in the first place, bless these people for the active compassion with which they wait for a time when everyone has enough.

I recently listened to a 2013 "On Being" interview with the late civil rights leader and congressman John Lewis. He described refusing to give up on a more just society, even in the face of segregation.

I remind myself that waiting doesn't need to be bad.

"You have to have this sense of faith that what you're moving toward is already done," Lewis said. "And you live that you're already there, that you're already in that community, part of that sense of one family." He added, "If you visualize it, if you can even have faith that it's there, for you it is already there."

I admire the faith behind his nonviolent activism for justice on behalf of a whole community, Black as well as white. I admire a faith that could see the loving community for which he worked as a community he was already participating in even when he wasn't seeing evidence of that. I admire the powerful ways he chose to wait for what he hoped and worked for.

There's a place in the Bible that envisions redemption – a world made right –

and the qualities of life that would involve. It has God saying, "See, I am making all things new." (Revelation 21:5 NRSV)

"See"? That's quite a challenge. When we're grieving losses, pandemics or injustices, it can be so hard for any of us to see our world as it could yet be. What's more, it can be so very, very hard to act as if what we're most deeply hoping for is already underway, is already on some level a reality.

Seeing like that is a huge challenge. But why not try? I could act as if I'm already part of a community in which each person is beloved and valued. I could go forward as if I'm already part of each instance of grief receiving tender care and each family having enough.

That's at least a beginning to my list. What would be on your list? What are you waiting for?

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